BEING AND LOVE

AN ONTOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO HUMAN EXISTENCE

(Second Edition)

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book is not intended to be a "proof" in the sense of an infallible argument that absolutely demands intellectual assent to a particular conclusion. Rather, it is to be read as a search for the truth. It is a search, no doubt, influenced by my own life experiences, but which also involves reasoning and an appeal to the broader experiences of life that we share in common. Yet, it always remains, first and foremost, a received vision, articulated to help others in their own quest for answers to life's most important questions. It is the product of reflecting on my own life experience and returning to that experience with deeper insight in a cycle that continues to extend out into the horizons of mystery.

The more I reflect on my experience, the more I am convinced that Truth is something that we need to receive in humility as a Presence that we cannot create on our own. The presence of the world, for instance, is not something that we can argue to, but it is something that we must engage with and reflect upon. Truth, then, is not something that we have to hunt down in a quest to trap it, nor is it something that we can create on our own. Rather, it is a gift that we must humbly receive with gratitude. It is infinitely greater than we can capture in our limited humanity, and yet it must be welcomed when it comes. It is Truth that pursues *us*.

This book, then, is meant to be a grounding in Truth. It is a way of looking at the world, an overarching view of what it means to be a human person. There are many things in our lives that we cannot explain, but we can still understand. It is to deepen this understanding, to the extent that we are capable, that I have written this book.

This second edition, in particular, is the result of conversations I had with a fellow thinker on the journey of life about the first edition. His insights, questions, and challenges prompted a deeper search within myself for a better articulation of my thoughts. It was through this dialogue that I was able to revise, clarify, and more precisely express this philosophic vision that I carry in my

soul. I hope that the reader also finds this second edition to be more helpful in penetrating the mysteries of human life.

INTRODUCTION

We will begin our investigation into the meaning of human existence by outlining the questions which we must attempt to answer. Philosophical thought always finds its origin in facing the mysteriousness of life. The most important questions that we ask about ourselves are personal and go to the heart of our existence. Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? Does it have meaning? Was I created by God? If so, who or what is God? How should I live my life? What is the meaning of death? What is the purpose of human freedom? and so on. These questions immediately appear to us when we enter into philosophical reflection, and in this sense, they are primary to philosophical thought. They are the questions that initially rise to the surface when we interrogate our existence, and so, they are the ones that we must ultimately seek to answer during our investigation.

When we reflect upon our own experiences, all the way back into childhood, we discover these to be the fundamental questions. They are fundamental simply because they arise as a matter of course when we take a reflective attitude toward ourselves. They are questions that our minds necessarily encounter as we walk through life. They are, in a poetic sense, the objects that cause our feet to stumble amidst the cloudiness that surrounds deep reflection into the meaning of our existence. Everywhere we look within ourselves, we find mystery and questions, and we eventually find ourselves face-to-face with them. We become the very question that does the questioning, and when we examine ourselves through reflection, we seem to compound more questions with every answer.

Certainly, we can put off the problems that these questions pose to us. We can focus on other things, even distract ourselves on purpose. But eventually, we are prompted to seek their answers when we see the yawning grave at the end of the road of life. Death is the inevitable blow that instigates pondering into these areas that we may prefer to leave hidden. And so, we find that these questions may arise as a personal crisis. We know that our time must end, and

we are spurred to seek the truth of ourselves before our time runs out. Death is the end that each human person must face, and it is often in light of this end that we begin to examine ourselves. As human beings, we also invariably encounter suffering in our lives and the lives of others, and these experiences can lead us to doubt the value and meaning of life. Here we get a glimpse of the origin of the views of nihilism and atheism that life is ultimately meaningless and absurd because of the suffering, death, and ugliness that are found within it.

But it does not have to be that way. Human existence certainly has its ugly side, but it also has its beautiful side. Beauty can stir the intellect into philosophical reflection as well as suffering. For example, aesthetic beauty and the order of nature have been known to change some atheists into believers, just as suffering has been known to change some believers into atheists. Further, when we encounter the aesthetic beauty of the world, it can spark reflection into the goodness of life. It can give us a sense, even for just a moment, that life is precious, even despite suffering, that death is not the end, and that life is not absurd. Here we see the sparks of faith and hope that can lead to religious conversion.

It seems to us, therefore, as we set out on our investigation into the meaning of human existence, that there is a kind of battle going on between beauty and suffering to take hold of the human perspective. They both bid to influence the answers to our ultimate questions. On the one hand, death and suffering are bringing humanity into a state of crisis and weighing against the goodness of life. On the other hand, beauty inspires in humanity the notion that life is good and worthwhile. What are we to make of this battle between beauty and suffering? What is the meaning of this existential choice for or against the inherent goodness of human life?

Throughout this work, we will see an ontological connection between being and love brought to the surface, and it is this connection that we will use to tease out answers to these questions. For now, however, we will just make a few brief remarks about this connection. I began to notice it, personally, through an observation

of a simple act of love. I was attending an outdoor concert, and during one of the songs, the action of a musician caught my eye. As she was dancing on stage with a maraca and scanning the crowd close to her, she saw a little girl, about four years old, also dancing to the music. She smiled when she saw the little girl enjoying the music. She danced to the edge of the stage, caught the eye of the little girl, and beckoned her with a wave of her hand. As the little girl hesitantly approached, the musician held out the maraca that she had been dancing with. The little girl gladly took it and was able to participate in the song with increased joy. The pace of her feet quickened with excitement, and everyone smiled as she shook the maraca off beat from the music. After a few minutes, the maraca was returned to the musician by the anxious mother of the girl, and the musician continued dancing and singing on stage. What struck me was not only the simple beauty of this interaction but also that everyone else seemed to be drawn in by it. The crowd witnessing it participated in the joy of this gift from the musician to the little girl and could feel the warmth of it spreading through them. This small act of love, then, seemed to me to have radiated beyond the musician and the little girl and impacted others along the way. It seemed to have a ripple effect that went far beyond this brief exchange. I began to ponder how this was ontologically possible.

We can confidently say that this act was a gift from the musician to the little girl. But what was the gift that was given? The musician was intent on the child's enjoyment of the music. Wanting to further the child's joy, she called her over to share more fully in the music through her participation. This was a clear affirmation of *the being* of the child. This innocent gift was not just a transfer of an object from one hand to another. To leave the act at a material exchange is to entirely disregard the inner life of both the musician and the child. The gift enhanced the joy of both the giver and the receiver. Not only did the gift affect the giver and the receiver, but it also promulgated joy to the crowd through the beauty of the scene. Therefore, there seemed to be a threefold exchange that occurred in this act of love. The act had a positive, life-affirming effect of joy in

the inner life of the giver, the receiver, and the crowd. It sent the message to the receiver that, yes, your life is good and worthwhile. Yet, in the process, the giver and the crowd also seemed to have tasted the goodness of life. This act, furthermore, seemed to be an example of beauty precisely because it was an act of love. Here we are beginning to notice, for a brief moment, an unveiling of the ontological connection between being and love which answers the question of the inherent goodness of human life in the affirmative. At the outset, it seems that love most powerfully affirms the goodness of human life because it is the highest form of beauty.

However, we are getting too far ahead of ourselves. We must return to our dilemma. What guarantee, after all, do we have in this example that death is not the end? If death does indeed have the final say, then it fully laughs in the face of beauty, love, and being. Suffering becomes meaningless, turning life into an absurdity. If this is true, then any act of love, no matter how beautiful it is, cannot be effective in affirming the goodness of human life against suffering and death. Indeed, it cannot even pretend to compete in the battle that we have posited since all things must end in death. In this case, all acts of love are predetermined to be like the desperate echoes of a person falling into the abyss of a cave. Ultimately, they help no one avoid the despair of the same end. The musician, the child, and the rest of the crowd will move on, most likely forgetting the incident. That small exchange of love cannot be called forth as an anesthetic to ease the suffering and ugliness of the evil that they will face in life. Finally, their lives will both dissolve into absurdity and meaninglessness through their final breath.

It must also be noted that, in the preceding example, we have taken many answers to other philosophical questions for granted: the existence of other persons, the existence of an external world, the existence of a self, the relationship between body and mind, and an understanding of the nature of consciousness, just to name a few. Therefore, we must begin with the very basics of human experience. We will use the phenomenological method to begin our investigation, and from there we will move into the realm of the

ontological. We will ultimately attempt to answer the following questions: what, if anything, is the ontological connection between being and love? What, if anything, does this connection reveal to us about human existence? Is human existence ultimately good and worthwhile or absurd and meaningless? Let us develop our answers simply and without haste.

CHAPTER ONE – PHENOMENA

We will take perception as our launching point for our inquiry into human existence. The reason for this is that Husserl has shown that what is immediately given with certainty, through the use of the phenomenological *epoche*, are two types of existents: phenomena and consciousness.[1] These two existents are given in every human experience and are immediately apprehended upon a reflective description of perception. Human experience without consciousness and phenomena is impossible. Both are required and are present in every experience we have as human beings. So, we must begin our investigation with the following questions: What are phenomena? What is consciousness? How are they related to one another to form a single perception? We will examine the first question in this chapter, the second question in the next chapter, and the third question in the third chapter. We begin our inquiry with phenomena because perception always reaches outwards toward an object.

In this chapter, as we are investigating the nature of phenomena, we must note that we are primarily restricting ourselves to speaking of the world of appearances as given through the senses. We are first and foremost investigating the nature of this world of material objects, although we will also briefly touch on aspects of mental phenomena, such as thoughts. Most of us presume that material objects exist as something beyond what can be given to us through observation. We may even think that the object which we see transcends all observation of it and that it exists separate from

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[1] He states that, "we start with a series of observations within which we are not troubled with any phenomenological *ἐποχή*. We are directed to an 'outer world' [i.e. the world of the phenomena], and, without forsaking the natural standpoint, reflect psychologically on our Ego and its experience [i.e. consciousness]. We busy ourselves, precisely as we would have done if we had never heard of the new viewpoint, with *the essential nature of 'the consciousness of something'*, following, for instance, our consciousness of the existence of material things, living bodies and men, or that of technical and literary works, and so forth." Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson, M.A., D.Sc. (Eastford: Martino Fine Books, 2017), 114-115.

the way that it appears. It is the common-sense position that objects have an existence distinct from their appearances. However, we cannot take this for granted, and the phenomenological reduction precludes us from doing so. We must not try to move faster than our investigation will allow. Rather, we must simply begin by describing our perceptions of the world of objects, and from this description, we must define what we mean by reality. From this, we will uncover an ontological structure that is given to us by the phenomena. This, in turn, will allow us to begin reaching transcendental truths which are not dependent on appearances. However, in accordance with the phenomenological reduction, we must begin with the simplest truth as our starting point - the truth of perceptions as they reveal themselves to us.

a. the ontological structure of phenomena

We will begin our description of phenomena by stating that they include, by definition, any sensations. Everything we touch, see, smell, hear, and taste are part of what are considered phenomena. All of the information that comes to us via the five senses and appears to us with qualities such as color, odor, shape, sound, flavor, texture, etc. are part of the realm of phenomena. The couch upon which I sit. The computer into which I type. The sound of crickets out my window. The taste of salsa on my tongue. The smell of lake water in summer. All of these examples, therefore, are included in this category. Is that all?

We must also expand our definition of phenomena beyond the sensible realm and into the realm of the mind. The reason for this will become clear as we will show that consciousness is distinct from the mind and that mental contents are objects for consciousness. We will see that our definition of phenomena must

include thoughts, ideas, imaginations, emotions,[2] memories, plans, etc. The desire I feel to obtain a goal. The concept of a triangle which I have in my mind. The idea of a song which forms in my imagination when I am creative. The memory of last night's event. All of these will also be included in our definition of phenomena. For now, we will distinguish between these two different categories of possible phenomena. The first category, which is given to us via our senses, we will call *phenomena of the world,* and the second category, which comes to us as mental contents, we will call *phenomena of the mind*. Both of these categories are included under the general umbrella of our definition of phenomena.

So, according to our definition of *phenomena of the world*, we must seek to answer the question: what is the real world? What are we to make of the supposed reality of the objects that we perceive? After all, if idealism is correct, we can never know the world as it really is, outside of our perception of it. The concept of the noumenon, as given by Immanuel Kant, is unknowable.[3] Furthermore, Descartes has raised problems regarding the possibility

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[2] Although, emotions are unique in that they have corresponding phenomena of the world, such as increased or decreased blood pressure and heart rate. This fact will become of more importance in chapter two. "Every emotion has a psychic component which is accompanied necessarily by a somatic component. An emotion represents a psychosomatic unit. The psychomotor reaction represents the material aspect; the psychic activity represents the formal or spiritual aspect." Anna A. Terruwe, M.D. and Conrad W. Baars, M.D., *Psychic Wholeness and Healing: Using ALL the Powers of the Human Psyche* (Alba House, 1981), 18.

[3] The noumenon is the "thing-in-itself" as it exists transcendent of my perception of it. If all we can know are appearances then we can never know anything about the noumenon. Kant states, "we must admit that the very word *phenomenon* indicates a relation to something the immediate representation of which is no doubt sensuous, but which nevertheless, even without this qualification of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is founded) must be something by itself, that is an object independent of our sensibility. Hence arises the concept of a noumenon, which however is not positive, nor a definite knowledge of anything, but which implies only the thinking of something without taking any account of the form of sensuous intuition." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. F. Max Muller (n.c.: Kshetra Books, 2016), 90.

of being deceived by an omnipotent demon.[4] There is also the cultural example of the popular film *The Matrix*, which can be used as a philosophical thought experiment of being fooled by virtual reality.[5] In other words, the reality of our experiences of phenomena, at least as understood by a common-sense position, is put into question by the idealist position and skepticism. What are we to make of reality if we concede that it is possible, at any given moment, that we are hallucinating, dreaming, deceived, or in a computer-induced virtual reality?

But before we respond to the difficulties raised by idealism, we must take a moment to understand the phenomenological answer to the question of the essences of objects. We may ask, for example, what is the essence of this oak tree that I perceive through my window? What is the oak tree, as an object? How are we to define it? Husserl noticed that phenomena are always given in profile.[6] By "in profile", it is meant that every phenomenon of the world is viewed from a particular vantage point. *Every* object which I view is in profile. For example, when I view this oak tree, I see it from a certain perspective. I see it right there, next to the parking lot, in the daytime, with its shadow reaching over the drain in the grass, with the red car parked next to it on the right-hand side, etc. I can only

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[4] Regarding his method of doubt, Descartes states, "I will suppose then . . . that some malignant demon, who is at once exceedingly potent and deceitful, has employed all his artifice to deceive me. I will suppose that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, figures, sounds, and all external things, are nothing better than the illusions of dreams, by means of which this being has laid snares for my credulity." Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. unknown (Seattle: Pacific Publishing Studio, 2010), 7.

[5] In an intriguing quote from the movie, Morpheus says to Neo, "Have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure was real? . . . What if you were unable to wake from that dream, Neo? How would you know the difference between the dreamworld and the real world?" Larry and Andy Wachowski, "The Matrix," Numbered Shooting Script, March 29, 1998, https://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/the_matrix.pdf, 31.

[6] For example, he states that, "whatever has the character of a spatial thing, is intuitable only through appearances, wherein it is given, and indeed must be given, as changing 'perspectively' in varied yet determined ways, and thereby presented in changing 'orientations'." Husserl, *Ideas*, 418.

see one side of the oak tree at a time and never the whole tree at once. The other sides of the tree are hidden from me due to the angle of my perspective. This is similar to the camera angle that is given in every photograph. Every photograph comes from a particular vantage point, and indeed, a critical skill in the art of photography is for the photographer to provide us with the best angle for the picture. We must note, therefore, that there is necessarily a vantage point given in every perception of a phenomenon of the world.

We also know that this vantage point can change. The oak tree reveals a "promise" to me that my perspectives upon it can be multiplied. This "promise" comes from the fact that all material objects are, by necessity, extended in space and through time.[7] If I see a tree, I know that its "hidden" side, which I cannot perceive at this moment, has spatial extension. There *must* be other views that I can make of it due to the spatial and temporal extensions that are inherent in perception. I can, for instance, walk around the tree to view it from a different angle. I can view it from outside of my apartment instead of through the window. I can view it at night when its shadow is cast by the nearby lamppost or in the early dawn when its shadow is at its longest. I can view it in the summertime when it is full of dense green leaves, or in the wintertime when its branches are like a broom sweeping the clouds across the chilled sky. I can take my eyes away from it and then view it again at a different time. I can come back later in the day and see it once more. I can tap it with my finger to hear the dull sound that the wood produces. I can, if I so desire, take a bite of the bark in order to taste it. I can subject it to scientific experiments.

In short, the number of ways in which I can perceive this particular oak tree are limitless because of the infinite diversity of times and angles from which I can view it. I can always make

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[7] Samuel Todes states that, "all perceptual objects are given as partially revealed (on their near side) and as partially concealed (on their far side). But in both ways the object is sensuously given (rather than produced by us) as wholly *there* (rather than absent, or merely possibly there)." Samuel Todes, *Body and World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 131.

further observations of it as an object. However, I cannot view all of these perspectives at once. What we shall call the essence of *this* oak tree then, is the totality of the series of different possible perspectives which can be taken upon it and observations which can be made of it. If we had a metaphorical bucket in which we placed every possible perception and observation of the oak tree under every possible circumstance, then that bucket, in its contents, would contain the essence of the oak tree. This is to be clearly distinguished from the idea of the oak tree as a thing-in-itself, separate from all possible perceptions of it, which would be the real essence of the oak tree. In other words, we are not taking the position that the *real* oak tree is severed from its appearances.

On the other hand, is this all that we can say about the essence of the oak tree? It seems that, if there is a series of appearances of the oak tree, there must be an ontological principle that unites them into one object. For example, if I collect material objects, such as baseball cards, then the principle that unites them into one series is the fact that they are a particular type of card. There is a universal that binds them together as belonging to this particular group. Any other objects, such as sea shells, rocks, jewelry, etc. cannot belong to this series. Now, we must ask: what is the ontological principle that binds together the series of appearances of an individual material object, such as the oak tree? The answer can only be its form.[8] The reason that the series of appearances of the oak tree is not mentally confused with the series of appearances of the car next to it is that they have separate ontological principles that distinguish them. The form unites together the series of

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[8] Aristotle states, "by form I mean the essence of each thing and its primary substance" Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W.D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941), 1032b1. And he also states, "In the case of all things which have several parts and in which the totality is not, as it were, a mere heap, but the whole is something besides the parts, there is a cause." Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 1045a7-10. For our purposes, the phenomena have revealed to us the form as that ontological principle that causes the series of phenomena to be united as the essence of a single object. Furthermore, in order for a thing to perdure amidst accidental changes (such as a tree whose leaves change with the seasons), there must be an underlying form.

phenomena of one object to tell a coherent and consistent "story" about that object. Otherwise, the phenomena would be scattered and non-sensical. If I walk around the oak tree, I will never see an elephant as the other side of it. And, if I walk back around to the front, it will not appear to suddenly be a boulder. The form of the oak tree must be specific to it and not confused with the form of another object, such as the building behind it, for example. We don't experience heaps of non-sensical phenomena, but coherent objects that have a particular and consistent way of being.[9] For this reason, the phenomena of an object imply an ontological principle that unites the series. This principle is its form.

But this is not all that is revealed by an investigation into the phenomena of an object. There must also be an ontological *act* that gives rise to the phenomenal object as an *existent.* This act explains that the phenomenon *is*. For this reason, the being of the phenomenon is better thought of as dynamic rather than static. By this, we mean to say that the being of phenomenal objects is an act as opposed to a potency.[10] In other words, if the phenomenon did not have being, it would not be able to be perceived because it would not exist. It is the being of the phenomenon that actualizes it *as an*

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[9] In defending the moderate realism of Aquinas, G.K. Chesterton says that, in Nominalist philosophy, "a man is so much an individual that he is not even a man." G.K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Francis of Assisi* (Ignatius Press, 2002), 160. We could never have a general knowledge of objects, ourselves, or the world if there were no forms. The world would be disorganized, random, and chaotic. Yet, we experience a world that is organized, systematic, and stable. The importance and necessity of a stable world outside of ourselves will be taken up more thoroughly in chapter two.

[10] Traditional metaphysics defines an act as, "the perfection which a subject possesses," while a potency is, "the capacity to have a perfection." Tomas Alvira, Luis Clavell, and Tomas Melendo, *Metaphysics: Understanding the Science of Being,* trans. Fr. Luis Supan (Makita City: Sinag-tala Publishers, 1991), 74. "Perfection" is taken in the sense of anything that has being. *Esse* is the common metaphysical term for the act of being. Because *esse* actualizes perfections, it must also be an act. It is a perfection because everything that exists must have *esse* since it is not in potency. It is clear that, in order to have a perception, the phenomena that we perceive must exist, and therefore, must have the act of being. Whether or not they exist beyond our perception of them, and how they receive this act of being, are other matters that will be taken up later.

appearance. The perfections of a phenomenal object require the act of being (i.e. *esse*) of those phenomena. So, we can add to the essence and form of the phenomenal object the fact that it also has *esse* as the ontological principle that explains its existence. Whereas the form ties the series of appearances (essence) into a coherent whole, it is the act of being of the phenomenon that actualizes its existence as a perception. This is simply to say, there could be no phenomena without the *esse* of the phenomena. The oak tree, the car, and all other phenomenal objects, even when considered strictly as mere appearances, require this act of being. Otherwise, there would be no perception.

Although Husserl bracketed the existence of objects through his phenomenological *epoche*, the fact that they *are* is forced upon us immediately by our perception of them.[11] If the phenomenal object did not exist as a perception, it would not be perceptible, and because it exists as one whole object united by a form, rather than scattered and unintelligible, then it must exist in some manner. *How* it exists will be taken up in the remainder of this chapter, keeping in mind the challenges of skepticism and idealism that were presented earlier. All that we are saying right now is that phenomenal objects have the act of being as perceptions.

Before we continue, however, there is a third ontological principle that is present in the phenomena and this is *matter*. Matter is pure potency that must be united to a form by the act of being (*esse*) in order to create a physical substance. If there were no matter then we would only encounter pure forms or essences as mental phenomena. However, since we are bodily and encounter objects on a physical level, we notice potency within objects. In other words, they are subject to change in their appearances. If objects were act

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[11] Husserl states, "I do *not* then *deny* this 'world', as though I were a sophist, *I do not doubt that it is there* as though I were a sceptic; but I use the 'phenomenological' *επoχή*, which *completely bars* me *from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence*." Husserl, *Ideas*, 110-111. What Husserl means by "spatio-temporal existence" here is an existence outside of our perception of it. We are not, at this point, putting forward an argument for the existence of objects outside of our perception of them. We are simply noting that perceptions have *esse* as perceptions.

without potency, then they would not be subject to this kind of change. For instance, baking soda and vinegar, when combined, have the potency to foam and create carbon dioxide. Furthermore, it is matter which differentiates objects of the same form, by which we can tell, for instance, the difference between this oak tree and that oak tree. The separate matter gives rise to their separate ways of appearing. Just as there is an ontological principle that accounts for their *actuality*, there must be some ontological principle that can account for their *potency*, and this is matter.[12]

What we have discovered then, by following the phenomenological reduction, are the ontological principles that were understood by traditional metaphysics, namely, matter, form, and *esse*. Husserl's phenomenological reduction necessarily leads to the ontological principles of matter, form, and *esse* which are required for the possibility of the kinds of perceptions that we have. Phenomenal objects have changeability in their appearances (matter) and coherence in their unity (form) that are necessarily present in their spatio-temporal existence (esse). But again, the challenges of skepticism and idealism pertaining to the reality of the world remain to be answered. At this point, we can say that phenomenal objects exist with this ontological structure, but we cannot say if they exist independently of our experience of them.

On the other hand, we cannot dismiss the phenomenological method since we necessarily encounter the world through our perspective. In one sense, the oak tree *is* its appearances and its appearances make up its essence. There is not a secret, unperceivable oak tree hiding behind the appearances. This would be to oppose the essence of the oak tree to the mere appearance of it. We can have no experience of an unperceivable object that is the "real" oak tree as distinguished from its appearances to us. Therefore, we accept that the essence of the oak tree, the *real* oak tree, is the complex totality of appearances that we can experience

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[12] Aristotle defines matter as, "that which in itself is neither a particular thing nor of a certain quantity nor assigned to any other of the categories by which being is determined." Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 1029a19-22. It is the potency of objects.

regarding it. Because we accept this, we are led also to accept the form that is the ontological principle uniting this series of appearances, the act of being (*esse*) that is the ontological principle catalyzing this series of appearances as an existing perception, and the matter that is the ontological principle accounting for its capacity for change, differentiation, and manipulation. But this does not mean that there is a hidden reality behind the perception of material objects. Rather, these ontological principles *are present in the phenomena as the structure necessary for their being*, and it is there that we discover them. They are to phenomena like the air that we breathe without noticing it. We will examine in chapter two how our active body enables us to perceive this ontological structure of phenomena, but for now, we are just noting that it is there in all of our perceptions.

Now, we are in the position to respond to the difficulties we raised earlier regarding the "real world". In short, the "real world" (meaning the world of material objects) is the world of the phenomena as they are perceived with the ontological structure that supports them. For a practical example of this, consider what happens when a police officer pulls over a driver on the road. The officer asks the driver for her identification and proof of insurance. When the driver hands her license to the police officer, the police officer does not attempt to unveil the hidden reality of the driver's license, as if the real license was shrouded by the appearance of the license. Rather, the police officer examines the phenomena presented by the license. He checks the hologram to make sure it is accurate, he compares the picture with the face of the person, he runs the license number through the registration system to make sure it is valid, and so on. Pragmatically speaking, therefore, it is nonsense to assert that the real license is somehow hiding behind the appearance of the license. The license is revealed by the inspection of the police officer. The totality of the series of its appearances exist within the ontological framework of form, matter, and *esse*. In other words, the real world is right where we left it - in the phenomena - and this ontological structure is built into the world of perception. The world of the phenomena that we encounter is the real world if the phrase

"real world" can mean anything at all.

b. hallucinations, dreams, and virtual realities

But we must also respond to the questions regarding hallucinations, dreams, and virtual realities. The question may be raised, in the previous example, that, although I appear to be pulled over by the police officer, what if I awake to find that I was only dreaming? Does not the whole practicality of taking objects at the face value of their phenomena and in the ontological structure revealed by them become dwarfed by the falsity inherent in the entire situation? What if the oasis that I think I see in the distance is just a mirage produced by the sun and the sand? What if I am really in something similar to *The Matrix* and everything I perceive is only a computer-generated reality? What if I am deceived by an omnipotent demon, as in Descartes?

To begin answering these difficulties, let us consider the story of a Mount Everest climber who, on his way to the summit, saw another climber suffering from extreme hypothermia at a high altitude. This other climber had made it through the night but did not have a chance at long-term survival. There was nothing he could do. He was hallucinating, had taken off most of his clothing, and believed himself to be on a warm, sunny beach. Of course, it was not long before his body succumbed to the cold, and on his way back from the summit, the climber saw that he had died. Now, we may use this example of hallucination, to ask again, how do I know that what I am experiencing is real and not a hallucination? Additionally, how can we reconcile the fact that the climber experienced the hallucinating man as freezing to death on a mountaintop, while the hallucinating man experienced himself as being on a warm beach? How can we understand these contradictory sensory experiences occurring simultaneously in two different people?

Part of the problem is that we are tempted to try to explain this event from a third-person perspective or a "birds-eye" view. We are trying to get outside of the experiences of the climbers, to be able to compare them with an unknowable third-person reality. But we

cannot do this because this is not how phenomena are experienced, and therefore, this is not how human reality is experienced. We experience reality through phenomena, and phenomena are experienced, as we mentioned earlier, from a singular vantage point. Therefore, if we look at each climber's perspective individually, we will see that, phenomenologically speaking, there is no contradiction. Then, we can return to examine our own experience in answer to our questions. Lastly, we will see how the ontological structure of reality, pointed out in the previous section, may aid us in answering these difficulties.

First, let us examine the point of view of the hallucinating man. Let us build up the case in favor of skepticism and take for ourselves the hardest example of hallucination. Let us suppose that he feels the sand between his toes and the sun on his skin, hears the ocean waves, tastes the salty air, etc. In other words, let us suppose that all of his senses, thoughts, and emotions are fully taken in by this hallucination. We must be discerning with our language at this point. From his perspective, he does not know that he is having a hallucination. His viewpoint does not contain the knowledge that he is experiencing the hallucination of the ocean breeze. He simply experiences an ocean breeze. He does not know that he is having a hallucination of sand between his toes. He simply experiences the sand between his toes. Therefore, he is not experiencing the fact of his hallucination as an object in his mind because he does not know that he is hallucinating. He is only experiencing the sensations of his hallucination as phenomenal objects.

However, if suddenly this man were to "snap out of it" and perceive himself as scantily clad on Mount Everest and suffering from hypothermia, he would say to himself, "I was hallucinating. I am doomed." This shows that *he would require more information* to say to himself, "I was hallucinating," and come to the truth of that knowledge. From his sensations, he cannot deduce that he is hallucinating. This is because he cannot get out of his subjective point of view to see it from another perspective. He has no reason to doubt his sensations of the sunny beach because they are given as they are - experienced phenomena. Further notice that this man's

statement would have to be spoken in the past tense – *was* hallucinating. The concept of hallucination is used to explain specific changes in phenomena from our vantage point concerning ourselves (past tense) or concerning our understanding of the behavior of others (past or present tense).

I may wonder right now, for example, whether or not this current experience is just a dream. Perhaps I will wake up and find out that I have not written this book. But does this possibility affect my current experience? Are my sensations doubtful in any way? Does it change my behavior? To each question, we must answer in the negative. I will continue writing this book and experiencing these phenomena. Perhaps the phenomena will change. Perhaps I will wake up and will say to myself, "It was all just a dream." But again, what does this possibility mean? It just means that I may encounter further phenomenological data which will alter the interpretation of the totality of my experience. I could only say it was a dream in light of this new information.

All experiences are full experiences. All phenomena are full phenomena. There is no measuring rod by which we could compare our experiences or phenomena to see how real they are. They always present themselves in all of the fullness and reality that they are capable of. We cannot even begin to make a distinction between "true" and "false" phenomena because all phenomena, by their nature, are given as true by virtue of their existence (*esse*). All experiences of the phenomena of the world are encountered in the same way. Indeed, it is precisely this fact which makes it possible to question the reality of those same experiences. There is no way to tell the difference between the experience of a dream and reality until and unless one awakens from that dream. But now, as we will see, it is this same fact that resolves the apparent contradiction.

Let us return to the perspective of the hallucinating man on Mount Everest. Again, from his perspective, he is not hallucinating and not on Mount Everest. Therefore, let us redefine him as the "man on the beach" so as to take his perspective upon ourselves. From the perspective of the man on the beach, where is the problem? Are his phenomena false? No. He is truly experiencing what he is

experiencing. What about his behavior? He is behaving appropriately for a man in his situation. If we adopt his point of view, then there is nothing to indicate that he is being misled in any way by the phenomena. There is no falsity in his experience as such, and so, he cannot know that he is hallucinating. His experience simply is what it is. There is no contradiction to be found because he *really is* experiencing the sensations of being on a beach.

True, we would also say that he *is really* on Mount Everest and not on a beach because we are privy to information that he does not have available to him. Therefore, we are able to understand reality in a fuller sense. If the man on the beach comes out of his hallucination prior to his death, he will then have a fuller and better understanding of reality. He will then know that he was hallucinating. However, it is notable that none of us have all of the information of the fullness of reality as it can be observed. Such a viewpoint could only be found in God, if He exists. Instead, we must each interact with the world of phenomenal objects as it presents itself to us and adjust our understanding of it accordingly, while striving toward the truth. We must not think that, because we may be deceived, the truth is unknowable. In fact, as we continue in our investigation, we will see that the most important and knowable truths are not dependent upon the veracity of our sensations.

But let us now turn to the perspective of the climber on the mountain to see if we can gain any more insight about this problem. From his point of view, he is observing the man who is hallucinating. He can say with certainty that the man he is observing believes he is on a beach but is actually dying of hypothermia on a mountain. Again, it is only from this vantage point, with the addition of more information, that we can say the other man's experiences *are not real*, and this is where we run into the crux of the problem. If it is possible to observe another person who is having a hallucination which does not align with reality, then how can we ever get beyond ourselves to know if we are deceived? How can we know that we are not dreaming?

As before, we must be careful with our language. The person who is dreaming is *really experiencing* the sensations of their dream

just as someone with late-life dementia is *really experiencing* their delirium. Again, we would never be able to say that our experiences contain any deception until we received more information that led us to that conclusion. More importantly, the experiences of dreaming or dementia *reveal* something to us about reality, namely, *what it is like* to experience a dream or dementia. Certainly, with our current set of facts, we would say that the climber has a better grip on reality than the man on the beach, but this is only because we have the benefit of seeing the situation from both vantage points. But then, we may ask, what if the climber is just dreaming this whole situation as a nightmare and is, in fact, asleep on his bed? If we are trying to check if experiences correspond with an external reality of material objects (apart from the phenomena) then we can always take our doubts one step further *ad infinitum*. We can always question if a certain perspective on material reality corresponds with a different, hidden, and unknowable reality that is always beyond our grasp. Here we see the poisons of idealism and skepticism in full force, and at the same time, the reason that these views must be rejected.

We trust our experiences because *they are telling us something about reality*. We can never be cut loose from the perspective that we have of any given situation, so we live this perspective upon the phenomena of the world as true. We go through the phenomena of the world in the same way that scientists perform experiments.[13] We live out our situation, we gather more information, we rely on the phenomena of the mind (such as memories), which are given to us in our stream of experience, to help inform our decisions, and when we experience something unexpected or new, then we alter our understanding of the situation based on the new revelation. For example, when a person draws closer to the mirage of an oasis to find that it was just a trick of the reflection of the sun on the sand, then they must adjust their understanding of the situation. Todes states that, "the mirage, like all

[13] Husserl also uses this metaphor. He states, "our procedure is that of a scientific traveler in an unknown part of the world who carefully describes what he finds on the trackless ways he takes – ways that will not always be the shortest." Husserl, *Ideas*, 280-281.

illusions about particular things, *disappears rather than further appears in the course of movements designed to make it further appear*."[14] This is an important point because it affirms that reality is revealed, not hidden, by phenomena. Phenomena *must always reveal something* about reality, even if we are mistaken about what it is being revealed to us. In this instance, the person tricked by the mirage has come to understand his experience in a different way based on newly available information. If I fail to identify the proper form of an object, it is by further appealing to its phenomena that *I learn from it* what it actually is.

We must again assert that there are no hidden substances or hidden realities of objects behind the phenomena, as if phenomena acted as a façade preventing us from knowing the *real* objects. Rather, the phenomena reveal substances and reality as they are. The more experiences we have, the greater grip we gain on reality. What is "hidden" are other views of the phenomenal objects that we perceive since we view them from a perspective and cannot grasp their totality all at once. The mirage has the appearance of an oasis. Based on how it appears to me, I may believe it has the essence of an oasis until further investigation reveals more about it. But I can gather this information only through appealing to its phenomena. It is only when we try to grasp our situation from an objective, birds-eye viewpoint that we run into contradictions and problems.

But this is precisely because *such a viewpoint cannot exist* in human beings. We live our lives based on the situation given to us by the phenomena and the phenomena that we experience are always limited in scope. However, as we noted in the previous section, the phenomena reveal an ontological structure within them. It is true that our individual situation is given to each of us as a subject, but this situation is always given within an objective ontological framework that is coherent, knowable, and consistent. In fact, dreams and hallucinations seem to be the great exception rather than the rule of experience. The reason why I might be mistaken about the world is not because it is chaotic and unpredictable, but because I

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[14] Todes, *Body and World,* 53.

have a limited viewpoint upon objects within a world that is indefinitely more expansive than my point of view. What ought to shock us is not the possibility of deception, but rather how predictable, orderly, and intelligible our experiences of the world are. We will have reason later to turn back to this fact with regard to the active body in chapter two.

Yet again, to attempt to leave our viewpoint and try to perceive reality from a third-party point of view always ends in failure. It is the nature of human existence to perceive reality from our individual point of view. This situation is reality, it is always incomplete, and we alter our incomplete understanding of reality as we receive new information. Human experience, by its very nature, includes the possibility of dreams, deceptions, and hallucinations. We recognize that there is more to the world of objects than we currently understand, but we still must live in the situation as it is given to us. Furthermore, it does not mean that there is an unknowable, external reality separate from the phenomena. Rather, phenomena are necessarily part of reality and they reveal reality. We may change our interpretation of our experiences, but the experiences themselves are self-evidently true because they are what they are and they cannot be anything else. It is for this same reason that we were able to encounter the ontological structure inherent in phenomenal perception.

Furthermore, when it comes to phenomena of the mind, such as thoughts, the thoughts themselves are given to us *as objects*. The content of the thought, however, is another matter. For example, if I think that 2+2=5, the thought, *as an object*, is given, even though the content of the thought is false. A thought, even if its content is false, is still truly there as a thought-object in my mind which can be analyzed. It has cognitive existence. Otherwise, we could never come to know of its falsity. This means that the thought is *truly present* in my mind, even if it is wrong. Someone may come along and show me the truth that 2+2=4. This does not mean that I did not have the prior thought, it just means that its content was untrue. Again, new information was given to me to lead me to the truth of this mathematical equation and to correct my unwished-for

ignorance.

We will see as we continue our investigation into human existence that the possibilities of dreams, hallucinations, and so on do not change the ultimate truth of what is given to us by our being in this situation. We find ourselves in the paradoxical situation that, although our perceptions may deceive us, it is those same perceptions that lead us to the truth. In other words, *the truth is given to us through our experiences and simultaneously transcends those experiences*. For instance, the ontological structure of reality is always true, regardless of the danger of deception regarding particular phenomena. Any false perception (whether dream, hallucination, or virtual reality) must happen within this ontological structure because this structure is written into the reality of any perception.[15]

It is the very possibility of deception that keeps us looking for a deeper truth, a fundamental structure of reality. When I wake up from a dream, the same ontological structure is in place, and I recognize it immediately. No perception is possible without this structure. Even thoughts and ideas must have the ontological form and *esse* of thoughts and ideas. As we continue throughout the rest of our investigation, we will continue to establish more of these truths. But for now, we are limiting our inquiry into phenomena as objects and showing that, when it comes to the phenomena of the world, there is an inherent possibility of deception that we must accept as part of human experience. But this possibility of deception does not hinder us on our search for truth. Instead, the journey

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[15] It is worth noting that there are two levels operating in this discussion at the same time. On one level, I must take my current understanding of my experience as the most fundamental reality. Truthfully, all of the evidence points to it, and there is no evidence against it. There is only mere possibility of being deceived by something beyond my control. If there were evidence against it, this would have to be taken into account and weighed in the balance of reason. On another (we might say deeper) level, there is an ontological structure in place that is necessary for *any* human experience to occur. Therefore, this structure must exist also at the level of a fundamental reality since human experience would be impossible without it. Even if we are deceived by our current perceptions, they reveal a structure that must be necessary for human experience to take place. Throughout this work, we will have reason to discover more elements in this structure.

towards truth implies a willingness to accept that we were wrong at some previous point in time. So, to acknowledge the possibility of deception is to seek for those things which remain true as the ultimate foundation of reality.

Before continuing on from this line of thought, let us dwell a little bit longer on one final note. When speaking of the possibility of deception and computer-generated sensations, we must acknowledge the strange possibility of our age to be able to purposefully enter into a virtual reality. Such a possibility has lately been demonstrated by the "metaverse" which is being branded as a "new reality."[16] This new technology is still fairly primitive, but we can postulate that, in the not-too-distant future, people may be tempted to enter more frequently and more fully into a virtual reality. Furthermore, we may postulate that these virtual experiences will become more lifelike and more expansive in their content. What are we to make of this choice? It should be clear from our previous discussion that we cannot look favorably on such an option. In fact, we should be seeking the most fundamental level of reality with all our truth-seeking efforts. There must be a fundamental reality of existence that forms the basis of all our experiences, and as we have shown with the ontological structure of perception, there could not be coherent experience without an ontological framework at this level.

The consistency of the world allows for the intelligibility of the world. For instance, I always wake up from my dreams in the same world. I recognize the bed that I wake in as the one I went to sleep in. Furthermore, the visions that I have in a dream, and the phenomena that I experience, all refer back to this fundamental world that I began in. Everything I experience in that dream is recognizable as existing in this current world that I am in. This world, as I currently understand it, is my baseline for understanding reality. Unless I learn that this world I am in refers back to another,

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[16]Denis Sinelnikov, "The Metaverse: A New Reality Explained," Forbes, April 21, 2022, https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2022/04/21/the-metaverse-a-new-reality-explained/?sh=462313ad1ec8.

more fundamental one, then I must take this as the fundamental reality of existence.

Similarly, when speaking of the man who is hallucinating that he is on the beach, we may say that the fundamental reality is that he is on Mount Everest, but also that his hallucination is part of this reality. His view of reality is, of course, limited, just as is the case with everyone, yet we all desire to know and live in the fullness of the truth. Given these reflections, we can conclude that it is more authentic to live in the fundamental reality than to choose to live in a virtual reality. We ought to seek to live in the most fundamental reality that we are aware of because it is the one to which all the potential subsets of that reality, such as dreams or virtual realities, refer. By willingly delving into a virtual reality, we run the risk of mistaking what is of minimal meaning with that which is most fulfilling. But here we are anticipating too much, and we must set aside this line of thinking for now.

c. phenomena and scientific observation

In order to have a fuller understanding of phenomena, we must take into consideration examples given to us by science. We will look at two examples for our purposes, one from the vast regions of outer space and one concerning subatomic particles, namely, New Horizons and the discovery of electrons. New Horizons is a NASA spacecraft that made observations of, among other things, the dwarf-planet Pluto.[17] The distance from the earth to Pluto is an average of 3.7 billion miles,[18] and it took New Horizons over nine years to reach the plant.[19] The NASA team had to make

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[17] "New Horizons," NASA Science Solar System Exploration, Planetary Science Communications Team, July 15, 2019, https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/missions/new-horizons/in-depth/.

[18] "Pluto, Dwarf Planet," NASA Science Solar System Exploration, Planetary Science Communications Team, December 19. 2019, https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/dwarf-planets/pluto/in-depth/.

[19] NASA, "New Horizons."

precise calculations, relying upon prior observations of space flight and astronomical data, in order to create a successful mission plan that would give us more observations to further understand Pluto. In this sense, we could say that Pluto had a vast "hidden" side that remained unobservable from earth since there was so much unknown to us about the dwarf planet. But this hidden side was not an unobservable reality. Rather, the NASA team proved that further observation was possible by constructing a space craft with the capability of sending data back to earth and receiving instructions across billions of miles in order to form new observations. With the information gathered by New Horizons, we now have a more complete view of Pluto including a better understanding of its geography, atmosphere, and moons.

Although there are still innumerable facts about Pluto that we do not know, phenomenologically speaking, we can understand this complex space mission in the same way that we understood the oak tree or the driver's license in our earlier examples. New Horizons' investigation into the phenomena of Pluto is much like the police officer's investigation of the driver's license. Scientists did not send a spacecraft to Pluto to find the secret reality of Pluto hiding behind its appearance. Such a mission, as we noted earlier, is impossible. They spent that time and energy to investigate Pluto as a phenomenal object capable of observation because it was taken for granted that it had the ontological structural principles of form, matter, and *esse* which made it a determinable object for observation. The data they received was analyzed as phenomena to give us a more complete picture of the reality of Pluto, and some of the conclusions were surprising. However, the essence of Pluto remains the totality of all possible perceptions. The complexity of the mission does not change this truth, nor does this truth take away from the success of the mission. We only use this example to show that the reality of our experiences (as concerns the material world) is composed of the very phenomena that make up those experiences.

We will take our second example from subatomic particles. Electrons are subatomic particles that have a negative charge, a mass of roughly $9x10^{-31}$ kg, and orbit around the nucleus of an atom,

which is made up of protons and neutrons.[20] Electrons were discovered in 1897 by physicist J.J. Thomson during his experiments using a cathode ray tube, which is a vacuum tube containing a cathode (-) and an anode (+), which are opposite one another and through which electricity passes from cathode to anode, then travels through a small hole in the anode, finally creating a glow on a phosphor coated screen at the far end of the tube. Over the course of his experiments, utilizing electrometers, magnets, positively and negatively charged metal plates, and a Maltese cross, among other objects, Thomson was able to deduce the existence and properties of electrons. For one experiment, he put the positively and negatively charged metal plates on opposite sides of the cathode ray tube, after the anode, to see if the light would bend towards the positively charged plate or the negatively charged plate. Normally, the light would travel in a straight line. However, when he sent a current through the cathode ray tube, he could observe the light bending towards the positively charged metal plate. He concluded that the particles must be negatively charged. He also determined the charge-to-mass ratio through a mathematical calculation utilizing data gathered from the strength of electric fields applied to the cathode tube, the angle of deflection of the cathode rays, the strength of the applied magnetic fields responsible for that deflection, and the distance travelled by the cathode rays. From these and other experiments, he was able to come to many conclusions regarding the properties of electrons.[21]

Phenomenologically speaking, is there anything here that should lead us to question our understanding of objects as a series of phenomena with a built-in ontological structure? Just as with our analysis of New Horizons, the answer is no. We certainly have not discovered any properties regarding electrons or any other subatomic

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[20] Anne Helmenstine, "What is an Electron? Definition and Facts," Science Notes and Projects, May 3, 2021, https://sciencenotes.org/what-is-an-electron/.

[21] Carmen Giunta, "Elements and Atoms: Chapter 16, Discovery of the Electron: J.J. Thomson," Le Moyne College Department of Chemistry, accessed June 18, 2022, https://web.lemoyne.edu/~giunta/ea/THOMSONann.HTML.

particles that would make us believe in a hidden reality that is outside of our observable experience. Furthermore, we have not discovered the existence of anything in the material world that is unobservable as a phenomenon. The essence of an electron is the totality of the series of its observable phenomena, such as electrical charge, mass, and certain observable behaviors that have been demonstrated through scientific experiments. Again, the reality of the world is revealed to us in the phenomena of the world and these phenomena reveal themselves as structured by ontological principles. There is no need for us to postulate the existence of any hidden substance outside of the phenomenal observations which we make of objects. The objects are their phenomena, and their reality is composed of their phenomena because of the ontological structure that they are a part of.

For the purposes of our investigation, then, we should take away two points regarding the previous examples. First, these examples constitute evidence that phenomena exist outside of our vantage point and are not mental contents, as idealists claim. It would be difficult to believe that electrons and Pluto, for example, are mere mental contents when, in fact, discoveries made about them come as unexpected shocks. Scientists would not have expected Pluto to have icy volcanoes or atoms to be divided into subatomic particles, but both have been observed through experimentation. If phenomena are simply mental contents, that is to say representations constituted by our own minds, then how could we be surprised by what they tell us about reality? Furthermore, the phenomena which demonstrate the qualities of objects, such as the oak tree and the driver's license, are given to us in profile. They come from a specific perspective as the objects of a vantage point. If they are objects to a vantage point, then it follows that they must not be immanently contained inside this vantage point. If they were, we could not take a point of view on them since they would be indistinguishable from the subject that perceives them. There is an indisputable difference between the perceived and the perceiver such that the perceived cannot be found inside of the perceiver. If a subject contained the material object within itself, then they could

not distinguish themselves from the object in order to take up a perspective on it.

This also gives us some insight into why materialism is an inadequate explanation of human experience. It cannot explain the subjectivity of the person who is having the experience. Materialism cannot account for the point of view that we have on the world. There must be something immaterial that is taking a perspective upon the material. Something that is pure object cannot take up a point of view on another object. The non-tenability of idealism and materialism will be discussed further in chapters two and three. We only mention them now to begin thinking about our relationship to the phenomena that we perceive.

As for our second take away from these examples, they show that we have not discovered a world of secret substances that exist independently of their phenomena. In fact, the phenomena reveal the substances as they are. Again, objects are their phenomena, the totality of possible observations we can make about them. They are the revelation of their own ontological structure. Science, no matter how complex, never leaves the realm of observation of phenomena or goes beyond the ontological structure revealed in them. Rather, it is an in-depth description of the breadth of the phenomena which we experience. Science explains phenomena in terms of phenomena and observation in terms of observation. But through ontology, as we will continue to see, we gain access a more profound level of reality at the foundational level.

d. the paradox of the falling tree

At this point, it may behoove us to consider the familiar example of a tree falling in the forest to further clarify our position. The question usually goes something like this: if a tree falls in the forest, but no one perceives it, does it still make a sound? Based on our foregoing discussions, we are now in the position to realize that this is a trick question. This question first invites us to imagine a tree falling in the forest and then invites us to imagine that no one is around to perceive it. We see the contradiction. If I imagine a tree

falling, I am there, in my imagination, taking a perspective upon the tree and "observing" it falling down in the middle of the forest. Then, I am asked to imagine that it was not perceived, and I must attempt to undue the perspective I have formed in my imagination. Finally, I am asked if it makes a sound. Now, we know that a sound is a phenomenon that can be described in two ways. First, it is a sensation that I experience. Second, it may be described scientifically as a vibration that creates a wave of pressure travelling through a medium,[22] but this does not change the fact that it is an observable phenomenon. This understanding of sound is based on observable experiments such as the change in pitch and vibration of a guitar string plucked on different frets.[23]

This scientific definition does not release us from a phenomenological understanding of sound. Sound is its phenomena. It is experienced and observable. Whether I imagine in my mind the sound of the tree falling as physical waves or as a sensation to the ear, I am still picturing a phenomenon of sound in my imagination from a particular perspective. In other words, even if I adopt the scientific definition of sound, and even if I imagine the sound of the tree falling as waves emanating from their source, but without an ear to detect them, I am still there, in my imagination, when the tree falls, perceiving the sound. I am still taking a perspective on the falling tree and the sound it makes. It is only self-deception to think that, by imagining the sound of the tree as physical waves rather than a sensation in the ear, that I am taking an objective point of view. My imaginative point of view on the falling tree always comes from a particular perspective, although since it is occurring in my imagination, there is nothing about the object that is hidden from me. It is therefore impossible to make sense of the question in the way it

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[22] Gerald Penn, "What is Sound?," Department of Computer Science, The University of Toronto, accessed June 18, 2022, http://www.cs.toronto.edu/~gpenn/csc401/soundASR.pdf.

[23] Joe Wolfe, "How does a guitar work?," The University New South Wales Music Acoustics, accessed June 18, 2022, https://newt.phys.unsw.edu.au/music/guitar/guitarintro.html.

is formulated since the question itself implies a perceiver knowing the tree has fallen. We cannot pretend to undo this perspective.

We should also note, however, that there are realities which *may be potentially observable* even if they are not *actually* observed. This is what we saw in the case of the New Horizons mission to Pluto. NASA's mission revealed phenomena that, up to that point, had not been revealed. The same could be said concerning Thomson's experiments regarding the electrons. Our perception always gives itself as indefinite because it extends through space and time. We can keep moving through space and time to perceive additional objects, different vantage points of the same objects, or the same objects in a different time. Reality, as potentially perceived phenomena, is indefinitely broader than our current actual perception.

Additionally, Maurice Merleau-Ponty has made it explicit that perception is always given as a field; it always has a horizon.[24] For example, I am currently watching TV. I am focused on the images and sounds produced by the object. However, in the periphery of my vision, there is the door to the balcony, the window, the table, the rug, the violin, the picture, the ceiling, etc. All of these other objects are given to me in my field of perception as part of the indefinite horizon, which can become clearer if I examine them closely. For instance, if I look out the window to the house in the far distance, the house appears to me as obscure. But it also appears to me as given in profile, and as such, capable of further exploration. I may walk over to the house and perceive more clearly its shape, color, and construction. These remain potential phenomena for me.

But all of this means that the TV which I am focused on is not an isolated object. It exists in relation to a whole host of other

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[24] He states, for instance, that, "in vision . . . I apply my gaze to a fragment of the landscape, which becomes animated and displayed, while the other objects recede into the margins and become dormant, but they do not cease to be there. Now, along with these other objects, I also have their horizons at my disposal, and the object I am currently focusing on – seen peripherally – is implied in these other horizons. The horizon, then, is what assures the identity of the object throughout my exploration." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2014), 70.

objects. If I walk toward the house, then the TV fades into the horizon, along with my apartment. It is still there, as a potential phenomenon to experience, but it drifts further into obscurity the further I travel from it. Indeed, I may wonder if my apartment is not being robbed while I am away. Or, perhaps a fire is consuming my apartment while I am absent. This is psychologically why we are more comfortable leaving an unoccupied house unlocked if we are only going to be gone for a half an hour rather than an entire weekend. The longer I am away from my apartment, the further away it drifts into the obscure horizon of perception and the less clearly I perceive it.

Nevertheless, it is still there. It may be burned down or robbed, but I know the roads that lead me back to it. Further, as I am on my couch, in my living room, watching TV, my bedroom is also part of my perception because it is part of the field of the world that creates the horizon of potential perceptions. I may turn off my TV to go read on my bed, in which case, the TV finds its relation to the bed in the horizon of the world.[25] We will further seek to understand how this potentiality exists in chapter three. However, following these examples, if I observe a tree in a fallen state, after the fact, I have then perceived it as fallen and the event is known as part of reality. Then, I can be sure that a sound was emitted, in the scientific sense of the term. This is because I have actually perceived the result of the falling, which before remained an unknown potential perception in the far distant horizon and because I know that the world is consistently determinable. Again, *how* I know this will be taken up later.

This same point also applies to scientific theories regarding the origins of the solar system, for instance. We postulate how the solar system originated based on current observations. We utilize

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[25] Along these lines, Merleau-Ponty states, "when I move about in my house, I know immediately and without any intervening discourse that to walk toward the bathroom involves passing close to the bedroom, or that to look out the window involves having the fireplace to my left. In this small world, each gesture or each perception is immediately situated in relation to a thousand virtual coordinates." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 131.

our understanding of scientific laws (again based upon observation) in order to extrapolate, from our current observations, how it may have formed.[26] Granted, we only know this theory, to use Husserl's term, *inadequately*, that is to say without absolute certainty, because we were not there during the formation of the solar system.[27] However, the main point for us is that the *cause* of an event may still be observable *in its effects*. Similarly, when I perceive a fallen tree, I extrapolate from this current observation, combined with my understanding of sound, that it must have fallen and made sound waves. This extrapolation remains reasonable because it falls in line with, and does not contradict, the totality of my observations. That is why Merleau-Ponty also speaks of the horizon of time.[28] Phenomena, as extended through time as well as space, have an enduring aspect about them. Their existence can even be carried through time as the cause of certain effects. Yet it still remains true that a tree that *cannot, in principle,* be observed, in some way, by some observer, cannot fall because it cannot exist, and a sound that is *unobservable, in any way*, cannot be known.

This example further demonstrates the problems with trying to posit an unobservable, external reality of substances that are the objects which we perceive. If we cannot observe this external reality of objective substances, if they are unknowable to us, then on what basis do we posit them? Are we to believe that there are phenomena which exist without even the possibility of being perceived? If so, they are no longer potential appearances. But if they are no longer

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[26] Colin Stuart, "The Solar System: How do we know how it formed?," Science Focus, Immediate Media Company ltd, July 9, 2020, https://www.sciencefocus.com/space/solar-system-origin/.

[27] He says that, "self-evidence . . . is either *adequate*, incapable in principle of being either 'strengthened' or 'weakened', thus *without the graded differences of a weight*; or it is *inadequate*, and therewith *capable of increase and decrease*." Husserl, *Ideas*, 386.

[28] He states, "Each present definitively establishes a point of time that solicits the recognition of all others. Thus, the object is seen from all times just as it is seen from all places, and by the same means, namely, the horizon structure." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 71.

potential appearances, then how are we to establish their existence as external objects? How can they be observable? Rather, if we take material substances as they are, as observable phenomena within the ontological structure given by perception, then we resolve these contradictions and can rid ourselves of the problems created by Kant's notion of noumenal things-in-themselves.

e. *distance and spatial perception*

The previous insights, and especially the two illustrations of electrons and New Horizons, can also shed light on how we perceive distance. Distance, in fact, is not primordially a measurement of space. We simply do not experience distance in this way. Rather, as Merleau-Ponty has pointed out, distance, *as a human experience*, has to do with perceptual clarity.[29] When I say that something is *far away,* I mean that it is obscure to my sight and capable of clarification. The man whom I see in the distance, whose face I am trying to apprehend through my squinting, is said to be *far away*. But it is not because he is a certain measurable distance from me. Rather, it is because his face is unknown to my sight. As he approaches, I recognize him as my friend, and I issue a greeting. Furthermore, objects can also be *too close* for clarity. If I am looking through a microscope, for example, and I see a blur, I may need to refocus by moving the lens further from the object. Then it becomes clear.

In this sense, the distance of Pluto from Earth does not reveal itself as *far away* in a measured quantity of miles but in the extreme methods that scientists had to utilize in order to observe it. The same may be said of the *closeness* of electrons. This closeness does not reveal itself in nanometers but in the unique methods necessary for the discovery the particles. The *horizon* of our perception is what creates distance for us. Things are *far* or *close* precisely because we

[29] For instance, he says, "the distance between me and the object is not a size that increases or decreases, but rather a tension that oscillates around a norm." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 316.

have this horizon to our perception that makes them more or less obscure or clear. In fact, there is a balance between closeness and farness that makes things most clear. Distance is a vacillating that climaxes in a point of clarity, a sort of cathartic moment when the object is apprehended and understood with precision. This is why our measuring of distance is based upon our human perception and not vice versa.

f. beauty and reality as received

As we conclude this current phase of our investigation, we ought to acknowledge the beauty that can be found in the phenomena that we perceive. Indeed, our analysis of phenomena would not be complete if we did not mention it, and as noted in the introduction, beauty will be a recurring theme later on in our investigation. We ought to carefully note that each perception that comes to us via our five senses is a unique perception. No one has ever experienced these particular phenomena that we are experiencing at this moment, and no one will ever have an opportunity to experience them again. We, as humans, are opened into a world that, when reflected upon, is truly astounding. This moment that we are experiencing right now, for instance, is unrepeatable, and this fact alone can cause us to reflect and appreciate the beauty that often goes unnoticed in our busy lives.

This "stepping-back" from the daily flow of tasks shows us something about how we perceive reality, namely, that it is not something that we create. Rather, reality must be received by us. When we are caught up in our own activity, it may indeed seem as though reality is something that we can create and control. And indeed, there are aspects of reality that can be manipulated by our activity, as can be clearly demonstrated by the science of engineering. However, we must not let that cloud our fundamental understanding of our relationship to the world. The world exists for us as, first and foremost, received, and it is this that gives us a sense of responsibility for how we go about using it.

The receptive relationship that we have with reality is most

clearly seen in the phenomena of amazement toward something that is beautiful. In this type of amazement, we are struck with awe and wonder at the beauty of something in the world. We encounter something beautiful and become lost in the grandeur of that which exists outside of ourselves, something which is beyond our control, yet which draws us into itself. It is this drawing of ourselves to something outside of ourselves that constitutes amazement and that shows us very clearly that reality is primarily something to be received. It is only in first receiving it that we can subsequently act upon it. This phenomenon of amazement, this awe and wonder in the presence of beauty, teaches us a sense of humility, that we are not the authors of reality. Instead, we recognize with great profundity that we must receive it with reverence.

When we perceive a sunrise, a mountaintop view, a soothing piece of music, the flavor of delicious food, the softness of fur, or the smell of spring rain, for example, we sometimes get a fleeting sense that life is much deeper than the mere appearance of things. Consider, for example, the description of dusk given by Erazim Kohak in his work, *The Embers and The Stars*,

> The sun has not yet set: though its rays no longer reach down to the ground, they go on shining above it across the treetops, letting the shadows rise up among the trees and fill the valley. Contrary to legend, evening shadows do not fall: they rise up from the thickets as the sun edges toward the rim of the treeline. Only the tallest maples reach up above the pool of shadow and, for a few moments, catch the last rays of the sun. That is their moment of glory. All through the day they had merged with the profuse green of the treetops. Now they exult in the sunlight, radiant clusters above the darkened forest. It is a time to lean back and to give thanks for the miracle of the radiant maples.[30]

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[30] Erazim Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars: a philosophical inquiry into the moral sense of nature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 30.

Objects of beauty seem to emit a mystical transcendence that goes beyond the mere perception of an object. It is the task of art and poetry to help us to appreciate this transcendence and catch the glimmer of this mystical something. Furthermore, the depth, complexity, and organization of the phenomena of the world, as understood by scientific analysis, is truly awe inspiring and adds to our intuition that there must be a deeper reality than what we ordinarily perceive on the surface level of things. But what can this deeper reality be if it is not observable as a phenomenon? Did we not just say that there are no secret or hidden realities lying behind the phenomena? What can beauty be pointing to, then, that is somehow revealed by phenomena but deeper than the phenomena themselves? The answers to these questions remain to be seen.

Nevertheless, returning to our task at hand, we have, so far, when discussing phenomena, frequently used the term "vantage point" to refer to that point of view which was inherently given to us in every perspective on the phenomena. We will now definitively name this vantage point as *consciousness*, and note that it was the second existent which we said at the outset was inherent in every human experience. In the next chapter, we will turn to analyze it to understand it better. As we have understood thus far, though, consciousness is that which is necessarily given, along with the phenomena, as the vantage point from which they are perceived.

CHAPTER TWO – CONSCIOUSNESS

Let us now turn to examine consciousness in detail. Throughout this chapter, we will seek to avoid two errors. On the one hand, the subject can be incorrectly expanded to absorb everything in our experience so that all experience becomes merely a part of my own subjectivity. This is the error of idealism. On the other hand, the objective world can be incorrectly expanded to absorb everything in my mind and consciousness so that all experience becomes the illusion of a subject-thing who is merely reducible to a part of the material world. This is the error of materialism. In this chapter, we will try to maintain a balance between these two extremes. Consciousness, by its very nature, is difficult to define because it does not fall into the category of material things, nor is it a thought or an idea in the mind, nor is it the mind itself. But let us see what we can discover positively about consciousness, and its relationship to the world, through our experience.

a. consciousness as awareness

Consciousness appears to us, upon reflection, first and foremost, as *awareness*. Consciousness *is* awareness, and so, this is the first aspect that we discover about consciousness. It is, so to speak, wide awake, alive. It engages itself with phenomena. This is what Husserl discovered in his theory of intentionality: all consciousness is consciousness *of something.*[1] Consciousness, as awareness, must be aware of a phenomenon as an object of its awareness. The essence of consciousness is this awareness. As awareness, consciousness cannot help but rest its attention on an object, and if it did not have any phenomenon to grasp onto, it would fall away into nothingness. Furthermore, no phenomenon can "pass"

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[1] He states that, "it belongs as a general feature of every actual *cogito* to be a consciousness *of* something . . . in so far as they are a consciousness of something they are said to be '*intentionally related*' to this something." Husserl, *Ideas*, 119.

through consciousness without being noticed since, to be a phenomenon, it must be perceived by consciousness. It is consciousness that "lights up" the phenomenon as it appears, turning its potentiality into actuality. But we must try to be more discerning with our language.

Consciousness is the awareness of phenomena as they appear. It is the observation of phenomena. A conscious being is one that has a world opened up to it that it can interact with.[2] Without consciousness, there can be no appearance because there would be no perceiver. Consciousness, then, is awareness, and phenomena require its "attention" to exist in actuality. Without consciousness, there can be no phenomena. We are beginning to see an inseparable connection between consciousness and phenomena, but we will reserve a fuller analysis of this connection until chapter three.

For now, we will simply note that it is in the aspect of awareness that we see the necessary connection between consciousness and phenomena. Consciousness can be compared to a spotlight that shines upon objects whose appearances would otherwise remain in the darkness of potentiality. The stone that is revealed by the light is not the light and the light is not the stone. Yet, it is the light that reveals the stone as it is. Without the light, the stone would never have been revealed. Likewise, without consciousness, phenomena could not exist because they would have no perceiver to appear to. The appearances would remain forever in potentiality, without reaching actuality. It remains to be seen how they are held in potentiality, and again, we will turn to this in chapter three. For now, we note that phenomena, as perceptions, require a

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[2] According to Alva Noë, "to understand consciousness – the fact that we think and feel and that a world shows up for us – we need to look at a larger system of which the brain is only one element. Consciousness is not something that the brain achieves on its own. Consciousness requires the joint operation of brain, body, and world. Indeed, consciousness is an achievement of the whole animal in its environmental context." Alva Noë, *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009), 10. The interaction between consciousness and the world will become critical when we consider the role of the body later in this chapter.

perceiver for their existence. Without a consciousness to perceive them, they cannot exist in actuality.

b. consciousness as receptivity

The second aspect which we notice about consciousness is that it is *receptive*. It engages with phenomena through its awareness, but it does not create or manipulate the phenomena that appear to it. Consciousness cannot alter the phenomena of the world that it experiences. Instead, it experiences them as they are. The blue of this bottle is as it appears. Consciousness cannot make the bottle change the shape or tone of the blue nor can it change the color of the bottle. The bottle is revealed to consciousness as determined in its qualities.[3] The bottle "forces" its unique blue upon the consciousness which perceives it. If we were to temporarily anthropomorphize the phenomenon, we would say that the phenomenon cares not whether consciousness is offended by it. It asserts itself upon consciousness as it is. Consciousness must accept the blue of this bottle as it appears in the tone and shape that it appears. It cannot manipulate phenomena to be as it wishes; it can only be aware of them. At the same time, if we were to temporarily anthropomorphize consciousness, we would say that consciousness is "greedy" in its awareness. It comes into the world of phenomena with empty and open hands, gladly accepting any morsel without argument. Consciousness reaches out to phenomena and phenomena give themselves over to consciousness in a synthesized unity of experience.

Now, Husserl correctly explains that every phenomenon appears, when it is placed in front of consciousness as an object, as a

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[3] Merleau-Ponty uses the example of a blue sky. He says, "I do not lay out in front of it an idea of blue that would give me its secret. Rather, I abandon myself to it, I plunge into this mystery, and it 'thinks itself in me.' I am this sky that gathers together, composes itself, and begins to exist for itself, my consciousness is saturated by this unlimited blue." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 222.

foreground upon a background.[4] For example, the blue bottle appears on this table, next to that sink, in front of the window, underneath that light, etc. Every object appears amidst other objects which form its background. The objects in the background do not call attention to themselves as individuals, however. Instead, they blend together forming a synthesized unison of "background." This is reminiscent of our discussion in chapter one regarding the horizon of perception. When I focus my attention on the bottle, the rest of the room, the sink, the window, and the light, all fade into the background, blending together in harmony, but when my attention is drawn out the window to the tree blowing in the wind, the bottle "melts" into the background to join the sink, the window, the light, etc. The tree now becomes the *intentional object* of my consciousness. This does not mean, however, that consciousness is manipulating phenomena by changing them from foreground to background. This change does not alter the qualities of the phenomena in any way. Consciousness is still receptive, but we will come to see a certain activity and freedom in the receptivity of consciousness.

For example, I am sitting on my balcony watching the trees blowing in the wind. I hear an airplane flying above. My consciousness turns its attention to the airplane, and the trees conglomerate into the background. This change in the intentional object of consciousness does not in any way change the qualities of the phenomena. The trees remain where they are in relation to each other. If I return my attention to them, I find that their qualities are still the same. Their leaves are still green. Their bark is still rough. The sky is still partly cloudy. The wind is still blowing. All of this is still given to the unrelenting awareness that is consciousness, but it is given as background.

Now, just as a phenomenon of the world can be the intentional object of consciousness, so can a phenomenon of the

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[4] He states that, "every perception . . . has its perceptual background. The specifically apprehended thing has its *environment*, which appears perceptively with it, lacking all special placing in the sphere of that which is out there, yet adjusted to the nature of the environed thing." Husserl, *Ideas*, 316-317.

mind. An idea, a thought, a memory, a creation of my imagination, an emotion, all of these can be the objects of consciousness. This is why, in chapter one, we called these objects phenomena of the mind. They are, indeed, objects of consciousness, but they are also distinguishable from phenomena given to us in sensation because they are incorporeal. They do not have the ontological principle of matter. However, the fact that they are phenomena is given to us because they can be intentional objects. Therefore, because they are phenomena, they are also to be distinguished from consciousness, and this is why we make the distinction between consciousness and mind. Consciousness is only the awareness of phenomena and cannot be confused with the phenomena themselves, whether mental or material.

Let us now return to phenomena of the world and consider the optical illusion created by the image of a black figure on a white background which can be perceived as a vase or as two faces, depending on where the perceiver focuses their attention. This illusion is commonly known as Rubin's vase.[5] Once a perceiver is adept at the illusion, they can transition at will between seeing the vase and seeing the faces. But this example does not give any evidence that consciousness creates or alters phenomena in any way. On the contrary, the black-outlined figure remains exactly as it is, with its determined lines and white background. Consciousness does nothing to change the qualities of the phenomena, and it is this fact which enables the optical illusion to take place. Rather, what changes is the foreground-background distinction. In other words, this is no different from the example of the trees and the airplane. If attention is focused on the black vase, the white area becomes the background. If attention is focused on the white faces, the black area becomes the background. The black and white areas remain as unchanged by this process as the trees and the airplane. If consciousness could turn Rubin's vase into the appearance of a cow, or the airplane into an eagle, then we would have reason to doubt the

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[5] "Rubin's Vase," University of Glasgow, accessed June 18, 2022, https://www.illusionsindex.org/i/rubin-s-vase.

receptivity of consciousness. But since it cannot, we can conclude that it is appropriate to think of consciousness as receptive, but it remains for us to analyze the activity and freedom of consciousness.

c. thetic and non-thetic consciousness

Before we continue on that path, however, we must mention that, for the foregoing reasons, Jean-Paul Sartre was correct when he developed his theory of consciousness as both *thetic* and *non-thetic*.[6] Thetic consciousness is that side of consciousness that posits an intentional object. Non-thetic consciousness is the self-conscious awareness that is perpetually present and assists in forming the background of perceptions. This distinction explains how consciousness can shift from foreground to background. Consider the following example: I am driving my friend to a location with which I am familiar. I know the roads and the directions. While I am driving, we strike up a conversation. Because I know the roads, I can place the conversation with my friend as the intentional object for my thetic consciousness. I am still aware of the roads and the driving, but they only form a non-thetic background to the conversation with my friend. They do not demand the outright focus of my attention.

Now suppose that something dangerous happens on the road. The person in front of me slams on their brakes. I have to react quickly. My consciousness shifts away from the conversation, and the car in front of me becomes the object of my thetic consciousness. My friend is still talking, but I cannot make sense of what he is saying. His words have drifted into the non-thetic background that is formed by my self-awareness, and they are no longer the object of my consciousness. Once the situation on the road is resolved, I must

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[6] He states that, "every positional [thetic] consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional [non-thetic] consciousness of itself." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1956), 13. It is also worth stating that we are specifically examining *human* consciousness. It is not clear to us to what extent animal consciousness is the same or similar.

apologize and ask him to repeat himself. The road again becomes non-thetic background, and the conversation resumes its place as the object of my consciousness.

Every act of consciousness is simultaneously and necessarily both thetic and non-thetic. It is my non-thetic awareness that enables the background to be formed because it is this side of consciousness that is always aware of itself in its situation. If I am in the middle of an activity and someone stops me and asks me what I am doing, it is this non-thetic, self-aware side of consciousness that allows me to reflect and respond.[7] So, each act of consciousness contains both an intentional object presented to its thetic side and a self-aware background presented to its non-thetic side.

The non-thetic side of consciousness also perceives the background of phenomena as an indefinite field of horizons, as was discussed in chapter one. I can keep walking down a sidewalk, for example, while new phenomena appear and previous phenomena disappear back into potentiality. Because of my extension into space and time, which will be discussed a bit later, this background appears to me as indefinite, as always promising an endless supply of further phenomena.

Additionally, we noted in chapter one that phenomena are always viewed in profile by consciousness. This profile promises further phenomena if I continue my observation of the object. The solid brownness of the wood door, for example, refers me to the potentiality of touching the door to find its hardness. I may, of course, be fooled by this and find that the door is soft or that it is a hologram. That is to say, my extrapolation of the hardness of the door is reasonable but inadequate because it requires further observation of the door, namely by touching it, for its certainty. This

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[7] Sartre demonstrates this using the example of counting cigarettes. He states, "at the moment when these cigarettes are revealed to me as a dozen, I have a non-thetic consciousness of my adding activity. If anyone questioned me, indeed, if anyone should ask, 'what are you doing there?' I should reply at once, 'I am counting.' This reply aims not only at the instantaneous consciousness which I can achieve by reflection but at those fleeting consciousnesses which have passed without being reflected-on, those which are forever not-reflected-on in my immediate past." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 13.

is one reason, for example, why we state that phenomena do not exist as representations in the mind or as contents of consciousness. If they were mere mental contents, as idealism claims, then we could never be fooled by their "promises" as happens in cases of misapprehension. Additionally, if the form was established by an act of consciousness, then there would no longer be the possibility of deception about an object. This possibility shows us that the form, as an ontological principle uniting the series of phenomena around an object, does not come from us. Yet, the fact remains that further phenomena are always promised by every phenomenon that we experience. These further phenomena remain unknown and only potential until consciousness perceives them and brings them to actuality.

d. the freedom of consciousness

Sartre's theory that consciousness is both thetic and non-thetic exemplifies another characteristic of consciousness that we will tease out, namely, that consciousness is *free*. There is nothing that can prevent consciousness from shifting objects from foreground to background and from background to foreground. This is because consciousness is not a phenomenon, and therefore, it is not subject to the laws of causality that we find in the world of material objects and mental contents. Consciousness is the freedom with which I can choose to focus my sense organs, as parts of my body, on various objects. It is also the freedom with which I can choose, through the use of my mind, to focus on certain thoughts.

Because consciousness is nothing more than awareness, there is nothing within itself to prohibit itself from changing foreground to background and vice versa. Due to the freedom of consciousness, therefore, I can control my attention amid the phenomena of the world and the mind. I can choose to move around a tree to its other side or swivel my head to view the object that is in my peripheral vision. I can choose to linger on a particular thought or sweep it away into nothingness. Consciousness is free. The conversation with my friend in the car, the noise of the airplane which distracts

me from the blowing trees, and the image of Rubin's vase demonstrate the freedom of consciousness. Certain things can steal my attention in their direction, to be sure. For example, a slamming door forces my attention to it. Yet, there is nothing that prevents me from changing my awareness from one thing to another or from one idea to another. It is in this way that the freedom of consciousness is revealed to us. We will reserve a fuller discussion of freedom until the final chapter. For now, we are just noting that consciousness is free.

e. consciousness as activity

As we have noted previously, consciousness is receptive, but this should not be confused with passive. Because of the freedom of consciousness, we should add to our analysis that consciousness is *active*. Again, to assist our understanding, we may temporarily anthropomorphize consciousness. Consciousness is not slothful, sitting back and waiting for things to happen. It is full of life and energy, reaching out with eagerness to the phenomena like a starved man reaching out for food. There is no delay between consciousness reaching out toward its object and the initial, immediate perception of the object, although it takes some amount of time for the object to become determinate to consciousness.[8]

The activity of consciousness is demonstrated by its quick grasp of the intentional object. It may take a small amount of time for the object to come into focus, as through a camera lens, but this time demonstrates the activity of consciousness that always strains to get a grip on the object. When it does grasp the object, it does so in all of the fullness of which the object is capable. The object may be at too far of a distance to be clear to the eye, and it is always found in profile as we have noted previously. However, this does not change the fact that the object is grasped by consciousness in all of

[8] As Todes explains, "each person always has some such threshold of expectability, some minimal reaction-time, which sets a limit to his ability to respond. If things first appear, and then become present to someone, within this minimum response-time, he must be taken by sur-prise." Todes, *Body and World*, 63.

the fullness of which it is capable at that moment and from that vantage point. Further observation to clarify an object is always possible through the further engagement of consciousness.

However, it is important to note that there is a difference in consciousness' grasping of the thoughts of the mind. This is because the body does not play a role in the apprehension of mental contents. The reason for the minuscule delay in making physical objects determinate is that it takes time for the body to respond to the situation. For a perceptual object, there is a small amount of time that it takes for a person to physically orient themselves to it, but an idea is explored in the mind through further mental investigation. This exploration happens in a different way – intellectually rather than perceptually. The point is that the initial grasping of an intellectual object differs from the initial grasping of a perceptual object in that there is time required for the body to achieve its maximum grip on the object. A mental object, on the other hand, may be capable of further clarity, but this clarity is achieved in thinking rather than sensing. Additionally, it is possible for a mental object to be fully grasped in the mind instantaneously, whereas the physicality of the body always requires a minimal amount of time to apprehend its object adequately.

The role of the body will be reflected on later in this chapter. For now, we are noting this distinction in the grasping of physical and mental objects of consciousness because it shows another reason why idealism is mistaken. If physical objects were mental contents or representations in the mind, then there would be no delay in our grasping of them. Yet, because a physical body-subject is involved, there is always a delay, which can be observed in reflex reactions, for example.[9] We will keep exploring this line of thought when we come to discuss the role of the body.

But turning back to the activity of consciousness, we should not be confused by the apparent contradiction between the

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[9] Anne Fetterman RN BSN, Joseph Campellone MD, and Raymond Kent Turley BSN MSN RN, "A Quick Look at Reflexes," University of Rochester Medical Center, accessed July 29, 2024, https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=562.

terminology of activity and receptivity. A grasping receptivity, that is to say, an active receptivity, can be compared to a child reaching out to receive a gift from her parents. The gift is still a reception, but this does not prevent her from reaching out for it with active involvement and playing with it after it is received. Consciousness is relentless and tireless in its pursuit of phenomena, but as we noted earlier, it does not create the phenomena. There is an intentional orientation to a world in which consciousness finds itself. The world only appears for consciousness because it is actively engaged in the world. And yet, it is also receptive to information from the world. Consciousness is a relationship with the world; it is a fusion of subject and object that gives rise to experience. Consciousness is receptive, but it is also active. It is an *active receptivity*.

f. how can consciousness grasp itself?

There is yet another aspect of consciousness that can be brought out by Sartre's distinction between thetic and non-thetic consciousness. Sartre notes that consciousness can never grasp itself because it is, in every act, both thetic and non-thetic.[10] It can never become an object for itself as a phenomenon. Because of its non-thetic side, it always escapes itself and can never get ahold of itself. In this way, if it tries to apprehend itself as an object, it is similar to a dog chasing after its tail. We shall state, then, that consciousness is *subjective*. It cannot become an object in the same sense as a phenomenon. However, it must be able to understand itself in some way, or else our description of consciousness falls apart. We could not speak of consciousness if it could not, in some sense, be understood.

Consciousness must, therefore, grasp itself as a subject and

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[10] Sartre refers to the attempt of consciousness to grasp itself as a "game of reflections." He states, "as soon as we wish to grasp this being [consciousness], it slips between our fingers, and we find ourselves faced with a pattern of duality, with a game of reflections. For consciousness is a reflection, but *qua* reflection it is exactly the one reflecting, and if we attempt to grasp it as reflecting, it vanishes and we fall back on the reflection." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 122.

not as an object. To understand itself, it must "bounce" itself off of the reflective mind and catch glimpses of its own shadow as a subjective nature. It can grasp its essence as subjective awareness through the intellect which can apprehend essences and forms. In this way, the truth of consciousness can be understood in the mind, but only as a subject and never as an object. Consciousness, as a subjectivity, can only be grasped by itself in its self-aware subjectivity. Furthermore, the nature of this subjectivity can only be understood *by* its subjectivity. It is because consciousness is a subject that it can utilize mental reflection to understand itself as a subject. To understand subjectivity, the one seeking to understand must be a subject. In addition, this subjectivity can never be objectified by others or scientifically analyzed as an object, since it is not observable as a phenomenon.

Sartre, however, continues emphasizing the "nothingness" of consciousness to the point of contradiction, stating that consciousness, "is a being which is not what it is and which is what it is not."[11] Although there is some value in bringing out the notion of nothingness concerning consciousness, we must disagree with Sartre that this is how consciousness should be primarily defined. The reason, for example, why consciousness cannot grasp itself as an object is not because it is a nothingness, but because it is a pure subject that can never be held, either by itself or by another, as an object. Its pure subjectivity is not its own nothingness. It is the essence of consciousness. Subjective awareness is what consciousness is. We have seen that consciousness is definable in positive terms as an actively receptive awareness that is a free subject. Where, then, does Sartre's vision of nothingness enter into the equation?

We have indeed agreed with Sartre that consciousness is both thetic and non-thetic. But this does not bring division into consciousness. Consciousness is a unity that has no separation from itself - even the separation of nothingness. Indeed, one cannot even conceive of separation by nothingness. Sartre claims that this

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[11] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 127.

distinction between thetic and non-thetic consciousness brings a distance into consciousness and that consciousness is at a distance from itself since it is always watching itself.[12] But we have shown that consciousness cannot watch itself as a phenomenon or an object since it is a pure subject. The concept of "being-for-itself", as given by Sartre, as always distanced from itself, means that consciousness cannot be an object for itself.[13] And yet, at the same time, if consciousness is divided from itself in the way that Sartre claims, as a break within itself, then it should be able to grasp a part of itself as an object, which he has shown it cannot. We cannot have it both ways. It cannot flee from itself as an unknown and yet grab ahold of itself by always watching itself. This is the inherent contradiction in Sartre's view of consciousness and the reason why he must define it as a self-contradiction separated from itself by nothingness.

How, then, are we to bring together these two seemingly contradictory aspects of consciousness? How can it know itself without being separated within itself? Again, the key is that consciousness is the fullness of awareness as a subject. The concepts of distance and separation are physical terms that cannot truly apply to consciousness. Furthermore, we simply do not *experience* any separation or division within consciousness. Rather, we experience ourselves as a self-aware being that catches glimpses of its own nature through its subjective awareness, utilizing the reflective mind. We don't experience a distinction between thetic and non-thetic consciousness. What we experience is a single act of consciousness, which upon reflection contains these two inseparable qualities within it: self-awareness and object-awareness. It is the

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[12] For instance, he states, "the being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist *at a distance from itself* as a presence to itself [non-thetic consciousness], and this empty distance which being carries in its being is nothingness." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 125. He claims that *nothingness* is what separates thetic consciousness from its non-thetic awareness of itself.

[13] He states, "it is the obligation of the for-itself never to exist except in the form of an elsewhere in relation to itself, to exist as a being which perpetually effects in itself a break in being. This break does not refer us elsewhere to another being; it is only a perpetual reference of self to self, of the reflection to the reflecting, of the reflecting to the reflection." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 126.

distinction between thoughts (phenomena of the mind) and consciousness (subject) that allows this type of self-reflection to take place. However, it is the pure subjectivity of consciousness that *enables* it to know itself as a subject in the first place. This occurs because it is its own activity.

It follows that the thetic and non-thetic sides of consciousness are distinguishable in name only. Consciousness is not thetic and non-thetic because it is separated from itself, but rather because it is so filled with itself as an awareness that it must be both, inseparably and simultaneously. Consciousness, in a word, is so close to itself, so full of itself as subject, so one with itself, that it must be aware of itself in its situation in one single act of awareness. No separation can be found within it because it is filled with its own subjectivity. It is not self-aware because it is an object for itself, but because it is a plenum of subjectivity. Due to its nature as a subject, it cannot help but be self-aware in its awareness of its intentional object. It is so complete in itself as a subject that it must necessarily be aware of its own doings. This same fact accounts for why consciousness cannot grasp itself *as an object*. It can only understand itself as a subject because there is no objectivity found within it.

So, the "distance" found within consciousness is not caused by a nothingness within consciousness but by its own subjective nature. In subjectivity, closeness and distance are synonymous because to be a subject means to be self-aware of oneself. They are one in the same reality present in a single unified subject. Consciousness, then, is aware of itself, not because of separation from itself, but because of identity with itself. Rather than saying that consciousness is separated from itself through nothingness, as Sartre claims, we are saying that *there is no separation in consciousness*. The ability of consciousness to know itself comes from the fact that it is the subject-aware.

g. consciousness as subjectivity

Consciousness is, in actuality, a plenum of awareness. There

is no separation, division, or nothingness to be found in consciousness. It is at once a fullness of awareness of its object and awareness of itself *as a subject*. We may even hesitate to use the term "of itself". It is the subject-aware. By the very nature of its subjectivity in regard to its object, it is self-aware. Sartre argues that consciousness of an object *is not* consciousness of an object because it is also self-consciousness.[14] However, as we have seen, we cannot split consciousness. Consciousness of an object *is* consciousness of an object through and through because consciousness, by its very nature as subjective awareness of an object, must be self-aware in the grasping of its object. There is no separation here between consciousness of an object and self-consciousness. Consciousness of an object *is* self-consciousness because consciousness, by definition, is self-aware. It retains its full identity with itself as this plenum of awareness that is, at once and by nature of what it is, both thetic and non-thetic.

The question is: "how can consciousness be self-aware without a break within itself, a break which Sartre believes is the presence of nothingness within consciousness? We have seen that our answer is that consciousness is an awareness that is both self-aware and object-aware in one single act of awareness. These are not two separate acts, but one fullness of itself as subject-perceiving-object. There is no need to bring the paradox of nothingness into the being of consciousness because we can explain the nature of consciousness without it. Furthermore, that is not how we experience our own consciousness, as was stated previously. Contrary to Sartre, then, we will state that consciousness is awareness, through and through. It is what it is. It is being-as-

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[14] Sartre uses the example of a mental phenomenon - a belief. He states that, "the ontological judgment 'belief is consciousness (of) belief' can under no circumstances be taken as a statement of identity; the subject and the attribute are radically different though still within the indissoluble unity of one and the same being." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 121. Sartre then tries to demonstrate nothingness as intrinsic to consciousness to solve the problem of how these two terms can remain in a unified being. However, we have seen that this can also be explained by the pure subjectivity of consciousness, without reference to the paradox of nothingness.

consciousness.

Additionally, if consciousness is subject, then it cannot be reduceable to mere brain activity as materialists claim. This is because we cannot understand consciousness without being a subject engaged in the world. To understand consciousness, we must take into account the agency of the person, their involvement in the world, which requires both subjectivity and self-determination. There must be both an external environment and a subject that is engaging with that environment. But by admitting this, we have already gone beyond brain activity as being equivalent to consciousness.[15]

To say, for instance, that consciousness is reducible to brain activity is like saying that a pool game is reducible to hitting balls around on the table. We can only understand the pool game by taking into account the immaterial parts of the game, such as the rules and reason that it is being played. This, in turn, can only be understood by examining the players in their engagement with the world as subjects. The game, like consciousness, cannot be understood solely on the material level, but surpasses it through the subjectivity of the players. In a similar way, consciousness cannot be identified simply as brain activity since this cannot take into account the agency of the person and the engagement they have with the world. This engagement reaches out into the world, is entangled with the world, and cannot be explained by a simple recounting of material facts about the world. One must "get inside" the subject in order to understand what is happening, and this requires a subjectivity that, *ipso facto*, cannot be reduced to material phenomena.

A further objection comes to mind. If we abandon Sartre's view of consciousness as nothingness, then how are changes and

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[15] Noë states, "the brain is not, on its own, a source of experience or cognition. Experience and cognition are not bodily by-products. What gives the living animal's states their significance is the animal's dynamic engagement with the world around it." Noë, *Out of Our Heads*, 165. For human beings, this "dynamic engagement" includes a subjectivity, will, and intellect that cannot be accounted for on purely materialistic terms.

negations in phenomena explained? Sartre's view of consciousness accounts for the origin of negation because of his observation of the nothingness of consciousness.[16] If consciousness is this contradictory being, which is what it is not and is not what it is, then we have a being that can explain the contradictions found in the phenomena as brought about by consciousness. For instance, I feel my phone vibrating and hear it ringing. The notes of the melody change over the course of the song. The vibrations pulsate on and then off. Furthermore, a phone can exist in a state of *not* ringing, or it can be destroyed, or it can be malfunctioning. It is a phone and *not* an elephant. If it goes missing, I can apprehend its *absence*. How can something be and not be at the same time? How can something be interpreted as destroyed or broken? How can we sense the absence of a thing? What accounts for the negations, changes, and motion we find in phenomena if we abandon Sartre's account of consciousness as its own nothingness?

We must begin by noting that the diversity of phenomenal experiences comes from the phenomena themselves. We should call to mind our description of consciousness as receptive. Consciousness does not impose its will on the phenomena, rather, it learns from the phenomena. If my phone is broken, if the screen is cracked, for example, this crack is a positive quality among the other qualities of the phone. I say that my screen is cracked in the same way that I say my phone is green, or that it is connected to the internet. The cracked screen is just one fact among many other facts given by the phenomena which compile the essence of this phone. But at the same time, I apprehend this phone as *lacking* a properly functioning screen. It seems that this notion of lack must come from consciousness because it cannot come from the phenomena. But

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[16] He states, "there must be a Being (this can not be the In-itself) of which the property is to nihilate Nothingness, to support it in its being, to sustain it perpetually in its very existence, *a being by which nothingness comes to things*." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 57. For Sartre, this is being-for-itself since, "human reality is being in so far as within its being and for its being it is the unique foundation of nothingness at the heart of being." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 126.

here we may be confusing consciousness with the mind. As we stated earlier, the phenomena of the mind are not consciousness. Consciousness is the awareness that apprehends the phenomena of the mind. Consciousness has no thoughts, expectations, analyses, projects, or notions of its own accord. It is simple and pure awareness at the "back" of the mind which perceives the phone in the full positivity that it displays itself. Therefore, it is not consciousness that apprehends the phone as broken or the screen as cracked, it is the intellect that knows in the phenomena of the mind. My simple awareness of the phone makes no judgment regarding the phone. It is only through the phenomena of the mind, reflecting on the phenomena of the world, that I assert that the phone is broken.

Where then, does negation enter into phenomena? We have shown that it does not come from consciousness, as Sartre believes, and it does not come from the phenomena of the world, since they are full appearances in which no negation can be found. Furthermore, the phenomena of the mind are also subject to change and negation. How can they account for the negation of which they are also susceptible? Sartre was correct that we find "little pools of non-being"[17] throughout our perception of the phenomena, but they are explained by the ontological principle of matter and not by consciousness. It is the material aspect of sensible things that allows for change, motion, and negation since they have potency and are not pure actuality. We will return to this point in chapter three to study it in more detail. For now, it will suffice to note that the ontological principle of matter is the origin of negation, but it remains to be seen what roles the mind, the body, and the ontological relationship between phenomena and consciousness play in understanding this negation.

h. the relationship between body and consciousness

As we continue our examination of consciousness, we must give account for what it means to say that human reality is in-the-

[17] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 53.

world. Consciousness, as we mentioned earlier, cannot exist in a vacuum. Furthermore, we noted in chapter one that the objects of the world are given in profile. The reason for this is that we are in-the-world and can move about the objects that are co-existing with us in-the-world. The fact that we are actively engaged with this world is what gives rise to the horizons of time and space that we briefly mentioned earlier. We must now turn to give an account of the body and how it is part of our being-in-the-world.

Martin Heidegger, in his work *Being and Time*, was correct to state that *Dasein* is necessarily a being-in-the-world, and to show that being-in-the-world is an indissoluble unity.[18] Being-in-the-world is a requirement for human existence precisely because of the human body. Human reality cannot remain in its fullness if it is separated from the world because separation from the world would require separation from the body. By this, we shall mean that there is an inescapable bond between being fully human and being-in-the-world, and this bond is established by the body. When we are revealed to ourselves as in-the-world we are revealing a "flesh to flesh" union with the phenomena of the world. Consciousness is woven into the world through the fabric of the body, and so we must seek to understand the relationship of consciousness with the body to begin our account of what it means to be in-the-world.

The body is the extension of consciousness into the physical world. I am my body, but I am also more than just my body. By this, we shall mean that no part of the body is separated from consciousness, but that consciousness cannot be confused with the body as a physical object. Consciousness is throughout the whole body as the subjectivity of the body and not as its objectivity. My body is my subjectivity as situated in-the-world. Consciousness does not first perceive the body as a thing in the world to be utilized

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[18] He says, "The compound expression 'Being-in-the-world' indicates . . . that it stands for a *unitary* phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole," Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperPerennial/Modern Thought, 1962), 78. And he also states, "'Being-in-the-world' is a state of Dasein which is necessary *a priori* . . ." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 79.

and then put into action as a tool. Instead, consciousness finds itself already engaged with the world through the body, which uses equipment to accomplish goals. Heidegger brings out the necessity of our involvement with the world through his description of the "ready-to-hand."[19] It is clear from his analysis of the ready-to-hand that the body enables the meaning of the world to show itself through our involvement with it.[20] When we are engaged with the world in this way, we are not reflecting on our subject-object relationship with the world, and it is at these moments that we most clearly experience our unity with the world and that the world becomes meaningful for us through our active body.

I am a particular situation in-the-world because I am a body-in-the-world. When I reach out to type on my computer, for instance, I extend my hands outwards toward the keyboard and my fingers flow in an unanalyzed rhythm to satisfy my desire to put my thoughts on the page. The desire to type and my body form an inseparable unity in-the-world with the computer. My desire to write is my situation in-the-world that gives me the project of typing. Further, the object of my consciousness is the words on the screen and not the hand that types them. *I am the hand* that reaches out to satisfy my desire to type. According to Merleau-Ponty, "The subject who learns to type literally incorporates the space of the keyboard

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[19] He states, for instance, that, "as the Being of something ready-to-hand, an involvement is itself discovered only on the basis of the prior discovery of a totality of involvements. So in any involvement that has been discovered (that is, in anything ready-to-hand which we encounter), what we have called the 'worldly character' of the ready-to-hand has been discovered beforehand. In this totality of involvements which has been discovered beforehand, there lurks an ontological relationship to the world." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 118. The fact that we use tools to accomplish projects, for example, shows that we are a being involved with the world. This involvement can only occur through the body that we exist as in-the-world.

[20] This is seen in his example of using a hammer. He explains, "the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we *seize hold of it and use it*, the more primordial does our relationship with it become, and *the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is* – as equipment." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 98. (emphasis added)

into his bodily space."[21] My consciousness is extended through my hand and is aiming at the computer as its object, but I am not aware even of the computer as an object. I am only aware of the totality of my project of typing as a unity in-the-world. At no time do my hands-as-object or computer-as-object enter into the equation. If I am to reflect upon the role of my hands, they are *the instrument which I am* to fulfill the project I have of writing. Of course, my hands, unlike the computer, are not in isolation from the rest of my body, but in conjunction with it as a unity. This is what makes my body unique as a being-in-the-world. It is who I am.

Furthermore, it is my whole body that allows meaning to arise within my being-in-the-world. Without it, I could not be in-the-world. But if it orients my entire relationship with the world, if it allows the richness of the whole situation which I am in to reveal itself, then it must be because it is what I am. My consciousness identifies itself with the totality of my body. As we have seen, consciousness is not an object in the world. It is in-the-world but as a subject. Therefore, if my body is identified with my consciousness as necessary for my being-in-the-world, then it too shares in the subjectivity of my consciousness. For me, my body is subject. The fingers which I have define how I spread them over the keyboard. The desire to write defines my activity of typing. The sight which is my eyes defines the spatial orientation of the objects around me that I intend to use (the books I have for reference, the notes I have on scrap paper, the chair I am sitting in, etc.). The sound which is my ears defines the location of the conversation that is outside my window. The smell which is my nose defines the freshness of the spring season.

Everywhere and all throughout my being-in-the-world, my body is the subject to which all objects refer in a totality of references that shapes my existence. It is my body that situates me in-the-world, that allows meaning to arise in my world, and that orients me to this situation. Merleau-Ponty refers to this as a "body schema". He states that, "my body is polarized by its tasks, insofar

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[21] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 146.

as it *exists toward* them, insofar as it coils up upon itself in order to reach its goal, and the 'body schema' is, in the end, a manner of expressing that my body is in and toward the world."[22] Certainly, my body can become an object for others and even an object of study for myself as a phenomenon in the world, but this is not the original relation that I have with my body. We are here only concerned with the original relation of subjectivity by which consciousness identifies itself with the body. We are not concerned with the afterthought of the body as a phenomenon to myself or others because this is not my primordial relation with my body.

To further demonstrate the identification of consciousness with the body, we must take a few more brief examples. When I am on a hike in the woods in the summertime, it sometimes occurs that I will not notice a spider web hanging between two branches on opposite sides of the trail, and I will walk into it face first. When this happens, my immediate apprehension of the situation, before being formulated as a statement with words, is that *I have run into* a spider web. It is only upon subsequent reflection that I make the statement that the spider web has *hit me in my face.* We must be careful to distinguish these two statements. In the first statement, my consciousness identifies itself with the body and the spider web is the object of my consciousness. In the second statement, my consciousness takes my body, in particular my face, as its object, thereby "distancing" itself from the body. Neither of these statements are false, but the first statement, and not the second, demonstrates my original relation with my body. My body is not first the object which my consciousness inhabits, rather my body is the way my consciousness is in-the-world. It is the essence of my being-in-the-world. My body is my consciousness in-the-world. It is only by a wrenching away of my consciousness from my body that I can make my body an object for my consciousness. But it is this wrenching away, this throwing of consciousness out of the body to perceive it as an object, that is an uncomfortable alteration of my normal state of being-in-the-world. Such a perspective cannot be

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[22] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 103.

maintained for long. Sooner or later, consciousness reabsorbs the body through self-identification, and I become my body again in the original relation.

The same is true if I am walking along the path and a biker comes along in the opposite direction. My immediate apprehension is that *I have to get out of the way*, and not, *my body is in their way*. My consciousness does not notice a distinction between itself and the body until it reflects upon the body as a phenomenal object in the way of the biker. In this view, the body becomes just another object in the world and can be in the path of the biker just as a boulder that she would have to avoid. But again, it is not our usual posture of consciousness to take our body as an object, and even when we do, it is not the same as taking this boulder for an object since I never identify myself with the boulder in the way that I do with my body.

For me, my body is a sort of instrument that I am.[23] It is a tool in-the-world that can bend, break, grasp, move, etc. But, as we have shown, our normal relationship with the body is *to be this tool*. I am the one who can bend, break, grasp, and move. As Sartre has noted, I am the one who is this instrument in-the-world precisely because I can be bent, broken, grasped, moved, etc.[24] If I fracture an arm, it is *my arm* that is broken. It is when this instrument that is my body becomes broken that I am forced to notice it as an object. I can no longer type easily. It becomes difficult to fix a meal. I cannot shake another person's hand. But at no point am I dissociated from my body. When my arm is broken, it is the totality of who I am that is affected because this arm is part of my being-in-the-world as a body.

Not only does consciousness extend itself into the world of the phenomena through the body, but also into material things. For example, when I am driving my car, my consciousness extends itself

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[23] Sartre states, "[the body] is the instrument which I can not use in the way I use any other instrument, the point of view on which I can no longer take a point of view." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 433.

[24] He says, "It is because my hand can be crushed, grasped, cut, that my hand can crush, cut, grasp." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 20.

to include the length and breadth of the vehicle. I make sure that *I am* inside the yellow lines. I make sure that *I am* at a safe distance from the truck ahead of me. I make sure that *I am* turning the corner at the proper speed.[25] Furthermore, if I hit a pothole on the road, I wince at the sound of the thud that protrudes from under the car because the condition of the car affects my being-in-the-world. If it breaks down on the road, I am stuck and can no longer get to my destination. I have to call a tow truck, wait for a mechanic to fix it, find alternative means of transportation, etc.

Also, consider the relationship of a musician with her instrument. A banjo player, for instance, extends her consciousness through the banjo. She feels its vibrations, listens to the notes that come from it, and utilizes it as part of herself to make the appropriate melody.[26] Of course, we are not stating that a person identifies themselves with their car or their musical instrument in the sense that they do with their body. In each case, it is an instrument that is utilized by the body, and the body remains the being-in-the-world of consciousness. Consciousness does not inhabit the car or the banjo in the same way that it inhabits the body since I am *not* the banjo and I am *not* the car. Nonetheless, consciousness is extended into the world through the body in its use of objects. This is also the origin of possession and why I claim certain objects as *mine*. That is, certain objects have a special relation to my being-in-the-world. The car as a mode of transportation and the banjo as a form of self-expression. It is in this way that I identify with them as possessed by

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[25] This same phenomenon was noted by Merleau-Ponty. He states, "without any explicit calculation, a woman maintains a safe distance between the feather in her hat and objects that might damage it; she senses where the feather is, just as we sense where our hand is. If I possess the habit of driving a car, then I enter into a lane and see that 'I can pass' without comparing the width of the lane to that of the fender, just as I go through a door without comparing the width of the door to that of my body." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 144.

[26] Merleau-Ponty also uses the example of instrumentalists, and in particular an organist. He states, "He sits on the bench, engages the pedals, and pulls out the stops, he sizes up the instrument with his body, he incorporates its directions and dimensions, and he settles into the organ as one settles into a house." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 146.

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Furthermore, Todes has shown that we have non-conceptual, perceptual knowledge of the world of objects through the active use of our body as a material subject in-the-world.[27] For example, suppose I am bouncing on a trampoline with my nieces and nephews and I want to give a boost to their bounce. I know, *in my body*, to start pumping my legs and using my mass to make a sort of wave on the trampoline. I know, through perception and experience, that, if they hit the wave just right, it will boost their bounce and they will get more air. Now, I cannot conceptually explain how any of this works. I have a poor knowledge of the laws of physics and would be incapable of giving a satisfactory explanation to my nieces and nephews as to how or why they are getting a bigger jump from my doing this. However, I understand how it works naturally, non-conceptually, *in my body*. Through my experience and perception, my body has a working knowledge of physical laws and how to engage objects to take advantage of those laws to achieve my purposes. This same point can be made in considering a question such as, "do you *know how* to ice skate?" They are not asking if I understand it in theory. They want to know if I have gained the proper set of body skills for that activity. What they are asking is whether or not I have a kind of sub-rational knowledge, a *body knowledge,* of how to ice skate.

Consider also the experience of a baby or a very young toddler. Much of the first years of life are spent attempting to make determinable objects determinate through body skills.[28] Through learning to balance in a vertical field, to learning to walk in the horizontal field, to engaging particular objects with particular orientations in particular circumstances, children are gathering a

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[27] He remarks that, "A single perceptual judgment expresses a whole argument. A perceptual judgment expresses a determination arrived at by *skill* not by rule." Todes, *Body and World*, 214. Thus, we know the world in our body prior to our conceptualization of it.

[28] Todes observes, "through discovery of determinate objects, the freely self-moving percipient creates his own determinate skillful self." Todes, *Body and World*, 79.

bodily set of knowledge that is grounded in perception and body experiences.[29] This knowledge of how to engage with determinable objects becomes *written* in the body as they continue growing. They grasp, bite, claw, pluck, crawl, walk, run, swim, climb, pinch, jump, kick, and investigate all manner of objects with intense curiosity to develop this knowledge. Additionally, they are truly discovering themselves through their discovery of objects. They are discovering that they are a material subject in the midst of a pre-established world in which they are thrown with the objects of perception.[30]

The key point of these examples is that we, as human beings, do not primordially or primarily make objects determinable through conceptual knowledge. Rather, conceptual knowledge is based on perception. If it is not my mind that is determining objects, then at the very least, it must be my body. But, if I admit that my body is a physical subject that exists, then it must exist among consistently determinable objects in an external world. This means that, through my active body's engagement with the world, I reveal a reality outside of myself that is knowable to me. This is the necessary condition that makes human experience possible and the answer to our previous riddle about how we discover an ontological structure of matter, form, and *esse* within perception. A stable and determinable world needs to exist independently and *a priori* in order for any experience to be possible, otherwise the various needs

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[29] These are the four fields of perception according to Todes: "[1] The world as the field of all fields of our perceptual experience is sensed through our upright posture as our most general capacity to be up and about as an active percipient. [2] The general horizontal field of the coming to pass of things in the world is sensed in our forward-directed movement to encounter the passing of events. [3] Some particular circumstantial field in the midst of which we find ourselves is sensed through the arrestation of our movement . . . [4] The determination of what is going on there is sensed through a skillful bodily response by which the character of the thing is successfully grasped." Todes, *Body and World*, 264.

[30] As Todes says, "the whole sense of our exploration and discovery of the world is prompted by the sense of having been initially lost in the world." Todes, *Body and World*, 177. Through the stages of development and the growth of body skills, we are able to find ourselves as subjects in a livable world.

we have for our survival and flourishing could not be met.[31] Therefore, our experience of perceptual knowledge as an actively engaged body in the midst of a world of knowable objects demonstrates a stable, external, and independent reality, separate from ourselves that follows physical laws and has an ontological structure.

i. synesthesia and the perception of objects as a whole

We may also wonder how we recognize that the same object that we are seeing is also the one that we are touching. If all our senses give us access to perceptually different information, which is, after all, why we speak of five different senses, then how are they in communication with each other? How do I know that the softness of the blanket is attributable to the same object as the brownness of the blanket? Certainly, upon reflection, each of these senses is indeed contained within its own domain. However, in pre-reflective experience, they blend to form a unified, intertwined perception. The key to understanding this, according to Merleau-Ponty, is that we experience the world with our whole, unified body and not piecemeal through various, "juxtaposed organs."[32] Because we are

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[31] Todes firmly states, "*we necessarily know to some extent what we are doing because we are necessarily to some extent really doing it, and thereby making our world habit-able, if we have a world of experience at all*. This is the rock of our knowledge on which all scepticisms and dogmatisms are shattered." Todes, *Body and World*, 70. This is because, "the world of experience is the world we live in, in the full and active sense of being 'lively.' That means it must be a habit-able world, which is to say, a world to which we can become ac-customed." Todes, *Body and World*, 84. We could not successfully inhabit or become accustomed to a world that was not already stable and consistent because our pre-conceptual bodily engagement with such a world would break down and become impossible. Our survival as a body-in-the-world depends upon a pre-existing stable world that we can engage with.

[32] He says that, "the senses communicate in perception just as the two eyes collaborate in vision. The vision of sounds or the hearing of colors comes about in the same way as the unity of the gaze through the two eyes, insofar as my body is not a sum of juxtaposed organs, but a synergetic system of which all of the functions are taken up and tied together in the general movement of being in the world." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 243.

our body, and because our body is the one source of all our senses, it is our consciousness-as-body that unites our sensations of a singular object and allows us to grasp the object as a whole. It is my eyes and hands, as the unison of my body-consciousness, which encounter the brownness and the softness of the blanket as one object. My whole body is engaged with the whole object and is not parsed out among different senses. Consciousness provides the unity of my being-in-the-world as the single awareness of a single body-subject.

We experience this in the phenomenon of *ambiance*. For example, the ambiance of the woods in the summertime is not the isolated sensations of uncoordinated sense organs. Rather, it is the feeling of warm humid air on my skin blended with the sound of birds and crickets blended with the smell of damp earth blended with the sight of sun rays piercing through the leaves. All of this forms a unified atmosphere of "summertime woods" that we refer to as its ambiance. This occurs because my being-in-the-world is an already unified totality through my body as a material subject.[33]

My body is one subject, one consciousness, even though it opens itself into the world through five separate senses, and so it can sense, through these multiple avenues, the perceptual objects as one whole. Furthermore, my body *blends* the senses into a unified whole. For example, when I hear the crack of a baseball contacting the bat, I *hear the hardness* of the baseball. When I see the shaggy hairs of a dog, I *see the softness* of the fur. When I taste the bitterness of dark chocolate, I *taste the darkness* of the color. When I listen to music, I *feel* the rhythm of its beat. When I smell the baking of sugar cookies, I *smell the sweet taste* of the sugar. As Merleau-Ponty has demonstrated, "synesthetic perception is the rule and, if we do not notice it, this is because scientific knowledge displaces experience and we have unlearned seeing, hearing, and sensing in general in order to deduce what we ought to see, hear, or

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[33] Todes says that, "the kind of unity we have as subject is an objective condition of the corresponding form of knowledge, because without this unity as subject we could not be given, encounter or entertain, unified objects capable of being known." Todes, *Body and World*, 207.

sense from our bodily organization and from the world as it is conceived by the physicist."[34] By being a consciousness-body, I am a union of senses that inform each other and blend themselves together with respect to the perceived objects. This is why a golf ball *sounds heavier* than a ping-pong ball when they are bounced on the floor. And, on the other side of the equation, objects are whole and determinable by my body because they follow physical laws and have an ontological structure that pre-exists, and sustains throughout, my engagement with them. Otherwise, they would not be determinable to begin with. My experience of engagement with objects, then, is as a unified body-subject using and exploring unified objects with form, matter, and *esse* in a single perceptual whole that constitutes the unity of my being-in-the-world given to me by my consciousness.

j. space as the extension of consciousness through the body

The primary relation of the extension of consciousness throughout the body is given to us in perceptual space. The phenomenon of double sensation, which is the ability of the body to feel itself as feeling and feel itself as felt, reveals that my body is in space. For example, if I can touch my finger to the back of my other hand and feel first my finger as the sensation of feeling and then the back of my hand as the sensation of felt, while alternating between the two, this is because my body is extended into space. It is only possible for the body to reach out and grasp itself as a phenomenal object because it is in space. We must understand, however, that perceptual space is not an objective emptiness that is subsequently filled with objects. Rather, it is given from the relative extension of my consciousness through my body as in-the-world. It is a necessary aspect of being-in-the-world, and as such, it is relative to my point of view as a body in-the-world. We may refer to it as an existential, or a lived space.

It is my body that defines the perceptual space around me.

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[34] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 238.

We cannot imagine objective space. If, for example, I imagine objective space as a large, empty sphere or cube that is suspended in nothingness, then I am taking a perspective upon this sphere or cube. I am outside of it, viewing it from this angle rather than that angle. I am viewing it in profile from a point that is outside of the objective space that I am supposed to be imagining. I have thereby created additional space outside of the objective space and am no longer viewing it objectively. Therefore, the whole system falls apart.

Likewise, if I imagine objective space to be like a grid with lines extending through my body and into infinity, and I place my body within it like a game of battleship, at specific coordinates, I am still defining space from my perspective. If I try to place myself within this grid, I can imagine myself from a birds-eye view. But again, this view is relative. If, for example, I imagine myself at coordinates B 5' 7", then I am in relation to A 1' 1" or Z 9' 9", and this relation is mine, defined by me, and falls back into subjectivity. I adopt this relation from a particular standpoint. I may choose to wear it like clothes, and it seems to fit. But that is only because I have chosen it as the viewpoint of my location in space. It remains as subjective as before, only now I am imagining myself as an object in a system from an outsider's perspective. But this outsider's perspective is no less a subjective point of view, already to be found within a subjective space of its own.

However, this is not to say that objective space does not exist. It seems possible, for instance, that objective space can be abstractly defined, even if it cannot be imagined, visualized, or experienced. This could be the case if we were to define space as a relationality of objects to each other without reference to any particular subject. We must keep in mind though, that this kind of space can never be *lived*. We are saying that space, as a perceptually lived reality, must always be based upon a subject in-the-world. Certainly, there is a relationship between objects to each other that existed before me and will continue to exist after me since substances are not dependent upon me for their existence. Nevertheless, my understanding of this spatial relation of objects arises from my active body as a being-in-the-world. Perceptual

space, as an existentially lived space, arises from, is relative to, and is defined by, the subjectivity of my body as consciousness.

Let us consider this further. I apprehend the distance from my bed to the alarm clock as three steps. In the early morning, this distance seems to retreat further out of my reach. I must toss aside the sheets that have kept me warm through the winter night, and my only incentive is to stop the beeping of the alarm. But in the evening, when it is time to set the alarm for the next day, the distance is drawn closer because I am still energized, and I surpass the distance with minimal effort. It is in this context that space used to be measured in reference to the body. Cubits, for example, were defined as the distance from the fingertip to the elbow.[35] It is my body that shapes the space around me. This plate and fork were designed for the proportions of my hands and mouth. This bed was designed for the proportions of the extended, laying down body. This headphone set was proportioned to the distance around the top of my head and the shape of my ears. This computer keyboard was designed with the use of my fingers in mind. If I attempt to fall asleep in the backseat of a car, my body is compressed, turning around all night in a vain attempt to find a comfortable position. The space is too small. But in my bed, the dimensions are manageable, and I sleep well. We may consider here the fairy tale of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears". She gravitated towards the chair and the bed that were "just right" for the shape and size of her body.[36]

The original relation of objects to each other is also defined by my body. The pen is ten paces away from the paper. Together they form a relationship of instruments that is a project of my desire to scribble notes before I forget them. If I am out of pens and must travel to the store to get some, then this distance is weighed in the scale of my desire. Do I want to write down these notes that badly?

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[35] Bodie Hodge, "How Long Was the Original Cubit?" Answers in Genesis, April 1, 2007, https://answersingenesis.org/noahs-ark/how-long-was-the-original-cubit/.

[36] Robert Southy, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," Retold by Flora Annie Steel, American Literature, accessed June 24, 2022, https://americanliterature.com/childrens-stories/goldilocks-and-the-three-bears.

Will I forget them by the time I get back? Are they that important? The experienced distance from my apartment to the store is relative to my desire to complete the project that is in-the-world, and therefore, defined in terms of my body, my projects, and my emotions. To be sure, the distance from my apartment to the store is always the same in measured distance. But this is not my original relation to space. It is only as an afterthought that I notice the number of miles. Merleau-Ponty states that, "the spatial level is, then, a certain possession of the world by my body, a certain hold my body has on the world . . . the spatial level normally appears at the intersection of my motor intentions and my perceptual field . . ."[37] My original relation to space is my body as being-in-the-world with projects, utilizing the instruments which I find there. These instruments form a subjective web of distances between each other that is based on my projects for them. This explains why one day the store can be "just around the corner" and the next day it can be unthinkable to make the trip. The distance to the store, as I experience it from my perspective, is dependent upon the projects which are a part of my being-in-the-world.

k. the relationship between mind and consciousness

Next, we will seek to understand the extension of consciousness into the phenomena of the mind. We may say that consciousness inhabits the mental faculties of reasoning, willing, emotional feeling, understanding, imagining, remembering, etc. similar to the way that it inhabits the skeletal and muscular frame of the body. I am this mind similar to the way that I am this body. But I am also more than this mind just as I am more than this body. Consciousness, as a pure subject, cannot be confused with the mind as a psychic object, just as it cannot be confused with the body as a physical object. Although the mind is engaged in-the-world, it is the body that establishes our being-in-the-world. It is perception in our body that provides the foundation for conception in our mind.

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[37] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 261.

Therefore, we will see that, although the body alone does not constitute the entirety of our being-in-the-world, it does provide the ontological foundation for that mode of being.

Earlier, we stated that consciousness is actively receptive and that it does not manipulate the phenomena in any way. However, because consciousness is extended through the mind, the understanding of essences and forms that takes place in the intellect grasps a deeper meaning of the world than can be done by the body alone.[38] For instance, we can grasp the general meaning of "essence" as the totality of phenomena of a particular object. We are likewise able to grasp the general meaning of "form" as the ontological principle that unites the potential series of phenomena in a particular object. The same is true of the sciences which delve deeply into the nature of an object. As we noted earlier, the possibility of my whole body experiencing the whole object is only possible because there is a form that unifies those phenomena into a single object prior to my experience of it. There must be a single object, united by a form, for my body to experience it, and it is the intellect that can further my understanding of this object by grasping a deeper meaning of its form and essence and putting it forth for scientific analysis or reflection into its symbolic meaning.

We must, at this point, be careful to distinguish ourselves from Kant's notion of the role of the understanding as developed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.[39] First and foremost, because of the theory of intentionality developed by Husserl, we cannot agree with Kant's assertion that phenomenal objects are simply representations

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[38] Todes states that, "great dividends in knowable content accrue from our imaginative employment of the borrowed factual unity of perception, and give imagination its relevance to reality. We can borrow knowledge in this way, because we know we are the identical subject who freely transforms himself from percipient to imaginative subject and back again." Todes, *Body and World*, 233.

[39] Concerning the understanding, he states, "what is required for all experience and renders it possible is the understanding, and the first that is added by it is not that it renders the representation of objects clear, but that it really renders the representation of any object for the first time possible." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 70-71.

contained within the mind.[40] Secondly, Merleau-Ponty points out that, because of intentionality, we cannot agree with Kant's assertion that the understanding is what constitutes our experience of objects.[41] Rather, it is our intentionality towards a world, through our perceptual and primordially embodied being-in-the-world, that allows for acts of understanding to take place. In our engagement with the world, we discover a meaningfully given world prior to our understanding of it. Through the use of the phenomenological method in our investigation, then, we have avoided this pitfall of Kantian transcendental idealism. The world is not constituted by the understanding, but by our active body as a material subject in-the-world.

Phenomena cannot be contained in consciousness since consciousness takes a vantage point on the phenomena. They cannot be contained within consciousness without being absorbed into the

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[40] Husserl asserts that phenomenal objects exist outside of consciousness and we can move beyond the sphere of the *cogito* through the theory of intentionality. To this end, he states, "the studies we have just completed left us with the transcendence of the thing over against the perception of it, and as a further consequence, over against every consciousness generally which refers to the thing . . . in *absolutely unconditioned* generality or necessity, a thing cannot be given as really immanent in any possible perception or, generally, in any possible consciousness." Husserl, *Ideas*, 133. Objects, then, are not representations of the mind since they are always given to us in profile, as we have seen in chapter one, and are not fully grasped by consciousness. They are transcendent of our intellect since there is always something about them that is hidden from our perspective.

[41] He states, "what distinguishes intentionality from the Kantian relation to a possible object is that the unity of the world, prior to being posited by knowledge through an explicit act of identification, is lived as already accomplished or as already there." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Ixxxi. This is because, "in order to be able to affirm a truth, the actual subject must first have a world or be in the world, that is, he must hold a system of significations around himself whose correspondences, relations, and participations do not need to be made explicit in order to be utilized." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 131. In other words, we must exist towards a world that is already intelligible before we can grasp it with the intellect. Todes puts it this way, "practical perception is a three-term relation: a relation between a percipient and what he perceives in a common world in which he is thrown together with his object. Imagination is only a two-term relation . . . because the imaginative subject is identical with the world of his imagination instead of being in the world of his experience, the way he is as a percipient." Todes, *Body and World*, 159.

same nature as consciousness. But if this happened, they would cease to be objects because they would be absorbed into the pure subjective awareness of consciousness. Since consciousness is pure subjective awareness, the phenomena, as objects, cannot be contained within it. Once we understand the nature of consciousness and the nature of phenomena, we see that they are two separate entities, although our primordial experience is a wholistic union of the two, as Heidegger has demonstrated.[42] We will return to this point in the next chapter to develop it further. For now, we note that consciousness is distinct from the phenomena, yet phenomena are apparent to it in its grasp of them. They are two different existents united to form one perception, and this experience of the whole is phenomenologically prior to the experience of the parts.

We also stated that the phenomena that consciousness experiences are not constituted by consciousness. In other words, consciousness cannot change the color of this blue, the tone of this sound, or the texture of this tactile sensation. The phenomena assail consciousness and impose themselves upon consciousness as they are. Additionally, we have come to see that consciousness, as a pure awareness, is extended through the mind and grasps a deeper meaning of the forms and essences of the objects which it encounters. Essences, as infinite series, are transcendent to consciousness because consciousness cannot grasp the whole series at once, in all of its phenomena. However, these same essences are also apprehensible by consciousness because the intellect discerns them as they are revealed by the individual objects that it encounters through observation. When we are engaged with objects in the world we do not engage mere phenomena, but rather, we engage unified objects whose meaning is revealed by our engagement with them. Heidegger refers to this engagement as "freeing" the

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[42] He says, for example, that, "to say that in existing, Dasein is its 'there', is equivalent to saying that the world is 'there'; its *Being-there* is Being-in. And the latter is likewise 'there', as that for the sake of which Dasein is." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 182. In other words, the human person is always engaged in the world and cannot be understood apart from it. Dasein and world, consciousness and phenomena, constitute a whole of experience that cannot be severed.

objects.[43] The forms are not phenomena, but their form is primarily revealed by our engagement with the object.

We may understand this further by stating that, without the faculties of the intellect, consciousness could still perceive and engage objects but it could not analyze them through reflection. It could perceive and interact with the blue-bottle-object through the use of the active body, but without the capacity for a deeper manner of reflection by the intellect. It would remain, however, a blue bottle-shaped object that we could involve in our projects in-the-world among other objects. It is the mind that brings further comprehensibility to the phenomena of the world because, unlike the body, it can reflect in a deeper way upon the essences and forms. Again, this goes to show that the phenomenal object is not a representation within the mind, as Kant believed, since we are engaged with a meaningful world prior to our reflection on it.

Furthermore, consciousness, as awareness, cannot utilize the mind to destroy, manipulate, or alter the phenomena of the world in any way. It must rely on its extension through the body, which is already in-the-world, to change the phenomena of the world by pushing, pulling, grasping, moving, etc., and this is how the body allows the meaning of the world to unfold itself in involvement. It is through its extension into space through the body that consciousness perceives and utilizes the phenomenal objects. On the other hand, the role of the intellect, when comprehending the phenomena, is to extrapolate through reflection in order to more deeply understand the data of experience. This is most evident in the realm of scientific observation. While our body perceives and interacts with phenomenal objects to gather data, our intellect rehearses theoretical possibilities for the cause or coherence of the data. Here we see a

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[43] He states, "the previous disclosure of that for which what we encounter within-the-world is subsequently freed, amounts to nothing else than understanding the world – that world towards which Dasein as an entity always comports itself." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 118. In other words, our understanding of the world is primordially an engagement with the world that frees objects as part of our being-in-the-world. This kind of understanding is not an act of the intellect but an act of the active body.

glimpse of the mind and body working together, but in doing so, the body reveals its ontological primacy over the mind in grasping the meaning of the world, since, without the engagement of the body with the world, there could be no data to analyze.

The extension of consciousness through the mind is what allows us to grasp the meaning and value of objects in a reflective way. The mind indeed leaves a certain subjective mark on the phenomena of the world through its desires, valuations, appreciations, etc. that it gives to objects through its initiative. As consciousness-mind, we have likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions to certain phenomena that give psychological coloring to the phenomena of the world. However, the primary meaning of objects is given to us by their nature and not imposed on them through our intellect.[44] The meaning of an object is the revelation of what it is. In this sense, an object is its meaning because it bears its meaning in its being. The question is whether the world of objects is inherently unintelligible and we impose the meaning of objects upon them or whether we unveil their already latent meaning through our activity in the world. When we examine this question, we find that the meaning of an object is its own revelation of itself. It is not the creation of our own subjectivity. We must be careful not to confuse the one who unlocks the meaning of objects as the one who creates their meaning.

This is most clearly seen in nature, as Kohak has pointed out. He says, "were there no logos intrinsic to nature, were the human the source of all meaning and the nonhuman world around him devoid of all intelligible structure, then the world could not be understood at

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[44] Merleau-Ponty uses the example of a child being burnt by a candle. He states, "the light of a candle changes appearance for the child when, after having burned him, it ceases to attract the child's hand and becomes literally repulsive." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 52. We can see in this example both that the primary meaning of objects is found in the nature of the object and not given by us and that our interaction with the world feeds back into it with psychological "coloring" of phenomena.

all."[45] Consider the previous chapter when we analyzed the phenomena of electrons and the dwarf planet Pluto. The whole purpose of experimental science is to understand the meaning of the phenomena through exploration and discovery and not to impose meaning upon it. It is also demonstrated in basic matters of survival; the fruit of an apple tree can provide nutrition, but the dirt it grows in cannot; the wood of the tree can provide the firewood used for warmth and cooking, but the water which nourishes it cannot; the water of the stream can quench my thirst, but the rocks it flows over cannot.

Someone may protest that the examples I have used all have myself as the reference point and thereby show that I am still the center of meaning of the world. However, this does not change the fact that there is a primordial meaning that is given to me by the objects and not imposed by me onto them. Just because I unveil the meaning of objects for my own survival does not mean that I create that meaning. Furthermore, the previous examples indicate a meaning of the world that is inter-relational without reference to myself. For instance, the water of the stream, channeled by the rocks, provides hydration for the apple tree by soaking into the dirt. This allows the apple tree to create fruit that promises the continuation of the species and to create boughs for birds to nest in. Just as the distance between objects can be defined in objective space without reference to myself, so the interrelated web of meaning of objects transcends my own subjectivity.

Even if I disappear from this world, the substances have an interrelated meaning with each other that is not dependent upon me. They unveil their meaning to each other through their relation with each other. Even lifeless objects can interact with each other in such a way that their meaning is unveiled. For example, the waves of an ocean carving out a cliffside reveal the power of the waves and the capacity of the cliffside to be sculpted in this way. Additionally, in

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[45] Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars,* 74. Following our previous reflection in *section h* of this chapter, we could even add that there would be no world for us because an intrinsically unintelligible world is an un-inhabitable and un-survivable world.

my engagement with objects, I discover their meaning through a sort of "relational dialogue." I inquire of them through my engagement with them, and they respond in their reaction to that engagement. It is my intellect that enables me to then obtain deeper insight into the meaning of objects through reflection. Just as I am identified with my body through my consciousness, so I am also identified with the structure of my mind in my investigation of objects. Mind and body work together to reveal the meaning that is already latent in the world.

It is this relationship between consciousness, body, and mind, moreover, which allows us to realize, what Merleau-Ponty referred to as, an "intentional arc" of meaning. He says that,

> the life of consciousness . . . is underpinned by an 'intentional arc' that projects around us our past, our future, our human milieu, our physical situation, our ideological situation, and our moral situation, or rather that ensures we are situated within all these relationships. This intentional arc creates the unity of the senses, the unity of the senses with intelligence, and the unity of sensitivity and motricity.[46]

Because consciousness is extended through the body, as well as through the mind, it is situated in-the-world and it unlocks the richness of meaning that the world has to offer. Indeed, as we have been consistently pointing out, the body plays a primary role in allowing the richness of the meaning of the world to reveal itself. However, the intellect unveils more of the richness of its meaning. The body reveals the meaning of the world through our engagement while the intellect grasps the meaning of the world through reflection.

l. time and the mind-body relationship

From the foregoing, then, we agree with Heidegger that,

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[46] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 137.

"knowing is a mode of Being of Dasein as Being-in-the-world, and is founded ontically upon this state of Being."[47] The same is true for time as it is for phenomenal objects. Just as the intellect grasps a deeper meaning of objects, so it also grasps a deeper meaning of time. However, just as the intelligibility of objects is founded upon our physical engagement with the world, so the intelligibility of time is also founded upon our physical engagement with the world. We will see that, from our analysis of time, we can more clearly bring out how the phenomenal unity of mind and body forms our being-in-the-world since the totality of our being-in-the-world requires their inter-relationship. However, we must also state that it is the intellect that enables us to grasp a deeper meaning of time in the three modes of past, present, and future since it is the intellect that can understand the ultimate project for the sake of which an activity is done.[48] We will now turn to examine these three modes of time and how they relate to a consciousness that is extended through a mind and a body. It is in terms of mental perception that I reflect upon time. However,

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[47] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 88.

[48] Heidegger states that any involvement with the world points to an ultimate for-the-sake-of-which, which is *Dasien*. He states, "the totality of involvements itself goes back ultimately to a 'towards-which' in which there is *no* further involvement . . . the primary 'towards which' is a 'for-the-sake-of-which'. But the 'for-the-sake-of-which' always pertains to the Being of *Dasein*, for which in its Being, that very Being is essentially an *issue*." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 116-117. The intellect that *Dasein* has is what gives rise to this ultimate for-the-sake-of-which towards which it projects itself. In other words, *Dasein* must be a being that is capable of comprehending and determining the final reason for why they are involved with the world in the particular way that they are. This reason can only be grasped by the intellect and not by the body, even though the body is what situates us in-the-world as the ontological foundation for knowing through its active engagement. We may also add here that, if materialism were true, we wouldn't be able to have a for-the-sake-of-which that we could intentionally act towards as an ultimate *reason* for our activity. Acting toward this kind of ultimate end implies an immaterial part of ourselves (intellect, will, and consciousness) that is not reducible to the material world. Only something immaterial can reason and choose between alternatives around which to order their own existence. A materialistic worldview cannot account for the reasons behind the actions without appealing to a subject-person. But by doing so, they have already gone beyond their own materialistic understanding. Materialism, then, cannot give an adequate account to human experience.

this reflection is based upon a previous involvement with the world as an active body in-the-world.

Perceptual time, like perceptual space, is relative to me, but we also try to define it in objective terms. We speak of hours, minutes, days, weeks, etc. But this is not my primary, lived experience of time. We all know that a boring day at work or school can make it seem as though the clock is standing still. We also know that excitement can "make the time fly". According to Kohak, "The idea of 1800 hours on 6 June 1981 is a pure artifact, a construct imposed upon nature's rhythm, subordinating and ordering it."[49] The primordial meaning of time, he says, is given to us by the striving of things towards the fulfillment of their nature, and finally, their decay and death, whether it be a flower, a caterpillar, a wolf, or a human. This striving and decaying is marked and defined by the underlying rhythm of nature, such as the lunar cycle and the seasons that delineate times for birthing, growing, mating, dying, etc. This truly is the primordial sense of time in nature. For our purposes, however, we are focusing mainly on time as experienced by human beings as consciousnesses extended through mind and body as existentially situated in the world.[50]

When we reflect upon existential time, we find that we experience it through the three modes of past, present, and future and that these three modes are grasped by the interrelationship of mind and body. Heidegger correctly noted that time is essential to being-in-the-world. He states, "the Being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)."[51] This means that the human person experiences the past as the facticity of their situation in-the-world, the present as their engagement with the world, and the future

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[49] Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars,* 16.

[50] One could, in fact, speak of different "layers" of time. There is, at least, the primordial time of nature, the physical time of change and motion, the scientific time of hours/days/years, and the existentially lived time of human experience. More could probably be added, but it is not our purpose here.

[51] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 237.

as their for-the-sake-of-which that they project themselves toward. It is this existential time that founds the intelligibility of time for the intellect.

This intelligibility of time for the mind reveals itself in memory, understanding, and imagination, but it also reveals itself in our body structure. Todes observes,

> when we are active our front and back generate and acquire a temporal significance. Our front apparently brings into appearance what is coming to be because of what we are (forwardly) going to do; it thereby produces the (future) field of what lies ahead of us. Our back apparently leaves behind what has appeared and thereby produces the apparent field of what is now passed (past), so that the front-back body distinction makes possible the passage of time.[52]

Our subject-body, then, generates the temporal field through its activity. It is this bodily being-in-the-world, with front-back asymmetry, that is the foundation of the intelligibility of time and enables our intellectual understanding of it.

Concerning the intellect, the past is given to me in my memory as all those events which preceded my current existence, up to and including the present moment. When I remember something, I remember it as it was. The present is given to me in my understanding as the ungraspable yet eternal now which divides time into past and future. When I understand something, I grasp its meaning now, at this moment. The future is given to me in my imagination as all the projects that I develop for myself and all of the projects that I see in development for humanity. When I imagine the fruition of my plans, I imagine them as happening later on.

Let us begin by examining the past. The long-term past is primarily given to us as memories. I remember being a child and playing in the sandbox. I remember events with old friends whom I am no longer in contact with. I remember having a dog which has

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[52] Todes, *Body and World*, 49.

passed away and is no longer here. The effects of these events on my current situation are minimal. It would take a great strain of thought, for example, to determine how my past of having a dog would have influenced my being in this current situation. However, there are some memories of events in my long-term past that do affect the understanding I have of my current situation. For example, I remember being raised with two brothers, and I remember that one of them has a birthday today, so that is the reason I am talking with him on the phone. In terms of overall human history, it is similar. These memories are preserved in writings, videos, oral traditions, and audio recordings rather than as memories in the phenomena of my mind, but the overall effect they have on me can be the same. In some situations, the past as given by history does not appear to affect my current situation, but in other times it does. It would be hard to work out how a small skirmish in medieval Italy has had an impact on my present situation. However, the American victory in the revolutionary war has an obvious impact.

Our point here is to show that, first, the past is reflected upon in memories which are part of the phenomena of the mind, and second, that some of these memories are more obviously intertwined with the present moment than others. Merleau-Ponty states, that, "time gone by is entirely taken up and grasped in the present."[53] The reason for this is that our being-in-the-world reveals the past through our bodies and the objects around us. We hold our personal past in our bodies in much the same way as the world holds the past of

[53] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 71.

history in its objects.[54] The main difference is, of course, that the body is the seat of our subjectivity, and therefore, our activity. This is particularly noticeable with short-term memories. I remember coming to the library, for example, to study for an exam, and so that is the reason why I am physically present here. I remember getting myself into my car and driving here, and so that is why my car is in the parking lot. It is because of the note I left myself on my desk that I remember that I have an exam scheduled for tomorrow. It is important to notice that these memories align with the world of the present moment. I can observe right now, in the present moment, all the previous work that had been done by me to create notes in this class, and so it lines up with my recollection of having started my studies and having come to the library with the goal of working on them. The memories of the phenomena of my mind are intertwined with the previous and current actions of my body and based upon those actions.

On the other hand, if my memory did not line up with my current situation, if I remember coming to the library to meet my friend at noon, but it is now quarter past and he is still not here, then something has gone wrong. I need to reinterpret the connection of my memories with the present moment because my situation which is in-the-world, and which provides the foundation for my understanding of time, no longer matches those memories. Perhaps I mixed up the location or the time, or perhaps my friend forgot. All this is simply to show that the past is connected with the present and not isolated in-itself. The present drags the past along with it in-the-

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[54] This is particularly poignant in situations of trauma. Bessel A. Van der Kolk, M.D. states, "Dissociation is the essence of trauma. The overwhelming experience is split off and fragmented, so that the emotions, sounds, images, thoughts, and physical sensations related to the trauma take on a life of their own. The sensory fragments of memory intrude into the present, where they are literally relived. As long as the trauma is not resolved, the stress hormones that the body secretes to protect itself keep circulating, and the defensive movements and emotional responses keep getting replayed." Bessel A. Van der Kolk, M.D., *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 66. Here we see a clear example of the connection between past and present in the body.

world, and I apprehend the past in my mind through memories. As we noted in chapter one, the effects of events are often observable in the present moment, if only we look in the right spot. Further, due to the horizon of time that we perceive, we can understand how certain past events affect our present state more obviously than other past events. Some are clearly visible in the present, such as the revolutionary war, and others are obscure and fade into the distant horizon of the past, such as the medieval skirmish in Italy.

But my studying for this exam can also be seen as a project, and as a project, it refers me to the future in which its completion is my goal. The future is anticipated by my being-in-the-world and the current situation of my body in-the-world. On the other hand, it also comes to me in the phenomena of the mind as projects to be completed. I need to go to the store to buy groceries for dinner. I have plans to attend a fundraising event tomorrow. I look forward to meeting a friend there. These projects refer us to that which is not yet. The future remains undetermined. The phenomena of the mind encounter the being-in-the-world of the past as that which is "set in stone" and the future as that which remains "up in the air". Yet, by the very fact that the future remains undetermined, I see it as necessary for me to act now, in the present moment, to accomplish the goals which are on my mind. Of course, the same is true with projects on a broader scale of humanity, such as charitable initiatives where a collective of people come together to accomplish a single project. Therefore, just as the past is connected with the present, so the future is connected to the present through the projects which I am working on at this moment, with the engagement of my body, and look forward to accomplishing.

We may wonder how the phenomena of the mind can be projected into a future which is not yet. The answer lies in the fact that my current situation as a being-in-the-world necessarily anticipates the future. Because the intelligibility of the world is founded upon my being-in-the-world, the phenomena of my mind are necessarily involved in the temporality of my engagement with that world. I can, therefore, utilize the extension of consciousness in the mind to manipulate thoughts, ideas, projects, expectations, plans,

etc. in the same way that I can utilize the extension of consciousness into the body to manipulate the phenomena of the world, such as holding this pen and writing on this paper. To put it crudely, I can anticipate the outcome of a future project in my mind because I can also anticipate the trajectory of a football for catching it with my body. Consciousness can project itself into the future through the mind because it is already engaged in the future through its being-in-the-world. We can see here that the mind is necessarily intertwined with the body as part of our being-in-the-world, even though the body is ontologically more primordial to it.

We will later return to how consciousness is projected into the non-being of the future, but for now, and as a side note, we will mention how this interconnection between mind and body as phenomena explains, from a phenomenological view, why corporeal diseases can affect the mind. For example, a urinary tract infection in a patient with Alzheimer's disease can exacerbate their dementia.[55] Also, frontotemporal dementia, caused by brain shrink in the frontal and temporal lobes, causes changes in behavior, speech, and language.[56] We can extrapolate from these observations that there are changes in the phenomena of the patient's mind, such as their thoughts and memories. Similarly, neuroplasticity can allow for changes in behavior through changes in the brain.[57] We can now understand the phenomenological reason for this. Since consciousness is extended into the phenomenal world through both the mind and body, we should not be surprised that one impacts the other. We remain on the level of phenomena when we speak of the connection between mind and body because they are interwoven into

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[55] Clinton, R., "Sudden Change in Behavior? Urinary Tract Infection Could Be the Cause," Alzheimer's Association, October 21, 2011. https://www.alz.org/blog/alz/october_2011/sudden_change_in_behavior_urinary_tract_infection

[56] "Frontotemporal Dementia," Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, Mayo Clinic, 2022, https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/frontotemporal-dementia/symptoms-causes/syc-20354737.

[57] "Neuroplasticity," Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, LLC, 2021, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/neuroplasticity.

each other as part of our being-in-the-world. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find that mind and body can impact one another as intertwined phenomena which are united by a single consciousness' mutual extension into them.

The same can be said of emotions since they impact both our mind and body. We briefly mentioned in the first chapter that emotions are present both in the phenomena of the mind and in the phenomena of the world. For example, anxiety presents itself to the phenomena of the mind as obsessive or fearful thinking, while it also presents itself in the phenomena of the world through increased heart rate or heavy breathing. Emotions, then, are also phenomena that demonstrate an implicit mind-body unity that is brought about by consciousness' mutual extension into both since they are psychosomatic phenomena. They impact both mind and body simultaneously because our mind and body work together as an inseparable unity. Emotions point to this unity as necessary for our activity in-the-world because they are our psychic motors, without which we couldn't function properly.[58] What these examples show us is the implicit mind-body unity that is required for any engagement with the world as a human being.

And now, from our understanding of memories and projects as our reflective encounters with the past and the future, we can discuss the present moment. The present moment, as we noted earlier, divides time into the past and the future. I can perceive the activity of both the past and the future in the present moment. It is in the present that I always find myself, and so, in this sense, we can say that it is "eternal". The present is neither here nor there but always is. Yet we can never grasp it since it is always fading into the

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[58] "The *psychic disturbances* caused by repression manifest themselves especially by a certain *unrest* which pervades the psychic life . . . one becomes 'nervous,' tense, restless; one is unable to concentrate on any particular thing; one becomes agitated . . . The *somatic symptoms* attributed to the repressive process comprise the common complaints of neurotics: *fatigue, headache, insomnia, backache*, and many others . . . disturbances in *bodily functions* may also occur . . . even the whole body may feel the influence of the repression, and begin to show the pressure under which the emotional life operates." Terruwe and Baars, *Psychic Wholeness and Healing,* 58-59.

past. As soon as we say this is the present, it has already been set as an event in the past. Further, the present is always fleeing toward the future to refresh itself with new content. Consciousness, then, through its being-in-the-world of the mind-body unity, is extended temporally into its past and its future. I am separated from myself by my past and future, not because consciousness is a nothingness, as Sartre thought, but because my being-in-the-world as mind and body opens up the horizon of time for my consciousness.[59] We have come to find, therefore, that existential space and time are primordially subjective because they are presented to a subjective consciousness through its extension into body and mind.

Lastly, we must understand that consciousness, through its extensions of mind and body, "unfolds or constitutes time", as Merleau-Ponty has mentioned.[60] This means that, because I am a being-in-the-world, I am a being extended into non-being through the past, which is no longer, and the future, which is not yet. I am in the process of becoming, and that which I have been is left in my wake as I stream toward the future that I will be. Now, because I

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[59] Sartre states that, "Consciousness confronts its past and its future as facing a self which it is in the mode of not-being." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 72. It is apparent in our investigation that this "confrontation" is only possible because consciousness is extended through temporality in its being-in-the-world. Consciousness, as an isolated existent, is non-temporal since it is pure and simple awareness that cannot look back at itself as an object. This point will be further elaborated in chapter three. For now, we will note that this same insight also accounts for the phenomenon of bad faith. In his famous example of the café waiter Sartre states that, "I am a waiter in the mode of *being what I am not*." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 103. What allows a person to define themselves in a particular way is not pure and simple consciousness, but its engagement with the world as extended into a mind-body unity. The principle of non-contradiction does not need to be violated, "it is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject *and in the same respect*." Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 1005a18-20 (emphasis added). I am the waiter in the sense that I perform the duties of the waiter and think of myself as a waiter, but I am not the waiter in the sense that consciousness is a pure subject that cannot be objectified or defined in terms of phenomena. It is not a lie for the man to say he is a waiter, but neither is it the whole truth. We are talking about the same person but in a different respect. Again, we do not have to fall back onto Sartre's claim of consciousness as a nothingness.

[60] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 437.

open up a horizon of time, I can recognize others whose temporal horizon overlaps with mine, and it is this recognition that gives me the notion of human history, in which other "timekeepers" existed before me and will exist after me. Again, according to Merleau-Ponty, "since my living present opens up to a past that I nevertheless no longer live and to a future that I do not yet live, or that I might never live, it can also open up to temporalities that I do not live and can have a social horizon such that my world is enlarged to the extent of the collective history that my private existence takes up and carries forward."[61] We are not yet at the point in our investigation where we will fully analyze the existence of others, but we only mention this in passing as part of our apprehension of time. It is this apprehension of history that makes us believe that we are "in" objective time, but *lived* time, as we have understood it, is part of our subjectivity as a conscious being-in-the-world that projects itself into its future and reflects itself into its past through its extension into the mind-body unity.

m. culture, gender, and the body

Now that we have analyzed the relation of consciousness to the body and the mind, and have seen that the body is ontologically more primordial to our being-in-the-world, we are in a position to address the topics of gender and culture with regard to the body. Contemporary gender theories often regard the cultural idea of gender as an almost alien force imposing its will on everyone and keeping them from determining their own gender identity.[62] But once we understand the body as the primordial part of our being that situates us in-the-world, then we can properly understand the

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[61] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 457.

[62] The American Psychological Association defines gender as, "the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex." "Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students," American Psychological Association. 2015, https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf.

relationship between gender and bodily sex. Although we will grant that we can distinguish between these terms, it does not follow that they are thereby unrelated to each other. As we will see, they are inextricably bound to one another, not just as concepts, but as part of our personhood.

Our bodies are the foundation of our being-in-the-world as a subject. This we have already established. Without a body, we would not be situated in the world and the meaning of the world could not be revealed to us. As Todes observes, "not everything satisfies us. And we somehow recognize ourselves by the practical self-composure we gain through finding something that does satisfy us. This seems to indicate that we discover rather than create our self, just as in the case of objects."[63] It is our body that unlocks the fundamental meaning of the world, and it is from this meaning that culture is created among groups of persons. In other words, culture springs forth from our primordial situation in-the-world, and the body is at the center of this situation. It is the body, therefore, that defines cultural norms and not vice versa.[64] It seems that this is what Merleau-Ponty is expressing when he states, "if the body can symbolize existence, this is because it actualizes it and because it is its actuality."[65] All cultural norms, in some way or another, refer back to our primordial relation as a body-in-the-world. Furthermore, the most obvious meaning of our sexuality reveals itself to us through the nature of the body and its function of procreation.

The American Psychological Association defines sex as,

> a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex (i.e., atypical combinations of

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[63] Todes, *Body and World*, 176.

[64] Abigail Favale points out, "our bodies are not aesthetic objects; they are modes of belonging. Our bodies are continual reminders to us that we are not autonomous, that the fantasy of self-creation is no more than a fever dream, a symptom of underlying illness." Abigail Favale, *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory* (Ignatius Press, 2022), 231.

[65] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 167.

> features that usually distinguish male from female). There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.[66]

Furthermore, both an egg and a sperm are required for the propagation of the human species, at least under natural circumstances, and these are the only two gametes that exist in human beings.[67] Procreation is the natural reason for bodily sex. Even in the rare situation of an intersex condition present at birth, this situation can only be understood by referring back to the polarity of the male or female sexes and their function for procreation.[68] Nature reveals that the most basic meaning of bodily sex is not determined by conscious decisions or internal feelings, rather it is imparted to us by the act of procreation. In turn, it is the sexual organs, and their differences inherent in the male and female bodies, that give rise to cultural understandings of masculinity and femininity as genders.

Based on our analysis of the body as the ontological ground

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[66] American Psychological Association, "Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students."

[67] Dr. Paola S. Timiras, "The Reproductive System," Physiology of Human Growth and Development, University of California, Berkeley, Fall 2007, https://mcb.berkeley.edu/courses/mcb135e/repro.html. Consider also the fact that conservation biologists, when trying to preserve a species that is in danger of extinction, must find a male and female of the same species based upon their sexual organs. This shows that there is an unavoidable biological truth with regard to the distinction and inherent nature of maleness or femaleness that is rooted in the body of the individual.

[68] The APA's definition of intersex demonstrates this. They state, "Intersex individuals may be born with chromosomes, genitals, and/or gonads that do not fit typical female or male presentations." American Psychological Association, "Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students." This shows that the understanding of sexual organs is in a male/female dichotomy and that intersex conditions can only be understood in light of this dichotomy. If it were otherwise, then we would have to admit a third gamete and third set of genital organs that would be needed for the procreative process to take place.

of our being-in-the-world from which our intelligibility of the world springs, it follows that our gender stems from our biological sex and is informed by it because our sex is primordially prior to any expression that it may take. There are certainly innumerable ways in which the essences of masculinity and femininity may be expressed in a given culture, and too often these categories become overly stereotyped.[69] However, we must be careful to distinguish between the expression of gender in a particular culture and the connection between gender and bodily sex.

The essence of femininity and the essence of masculinity are, of course, culturally symbolized in different ways throughout human history. But to assert from this that there is no necessary connection between bodily sex and gender, and that one may choose their gender, is a *non-sequitur*. We must recall that the body is the foundation of gender because our primordial situation in the world is as a body-subject, the meaning of which we have not chosen of our own accord. Psychiatrist Karl Stern states,

> A madame Curie may develop what one commonly considers as male gifts, i.e. talents in the field of the analytical-scientific; and preserve the womanly core of her nature. Women in [religious] orders, such as Saint Teresa of Avila or Mother Cabrini, have often displayed physical tenacity, a fighting spirit, a sense of practical affairs worthy of a male "executive type" – and yet that certain sense of the womanly

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[69] According to psychologists Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky, "If we only ever talk about men as stoic beings unwilling to discuss their emotions, we should not be surprised to discover a generation of young men who gauge their masculine identity and their access to male community according to their lack of emotionality . . . Likewise, stereotypically feminine notions of passivity, hyperemotionality, and hypersensitivity offer few women a dignified path into adulthood. We wonder if some youth might feel less inclined to move beyond the male/female binary if they didn't experience only stifling and restrictive models of masculinity and femininity." Yarhouse, Mark and Julia Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today's Youth* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2020), 197. Favale also insightfully adds, "if girlness and boyness no longer reside in the body, there is no other ground for these concepts *except* stereotypes." Favale, *Genesis of Gender*, 158.

> is invariably there, in between the lines as it were. Under pioneer conditions women clear forests, dig wells and build houses – and their femininity persists underneath it like a permanent foundation . . . A man may be doing things which are commonly associated with the feminine, and his "maleness" is not the worse for it. He may devote his life to the care of the chronically sick or the aged, in a situation which demands tenderness and patience – yet he is not emasculated.[70]

Why is biological sex the necessary foundation of our gender despite the various ways it can be lived out? Again, it is because our body reveals the meaning of its sex to us in our ontologically primordial way of being-in-the-world. The meaning of our body is a given, with its masculinity or femininity, that cannot change. We noted in *section k* of this chapter that the meaning of objects is revealed to us by the body and not imposed by us through conceptualization. The same must be true of the nature of our bodily sex which exists inseparably as part of our being-in-the-world. It is from our bodies that the various cultures instantiate and symbolize the essences of masculinity and femininity and not vice versa.

Our bodies, then, provide the foundation for gender and culture. Regardless of how a particular culture's symbols of masculinity and femininity differ or change, the nature of masculinity and femininity remains the same because it is rooted in our body as our primordial way of being-in-the-world. This is what accounts for the connection between bodily sex and gender. The development of the body, with male or female sex organs, begins in the embryo,[71] and it is from our biology that our cultural symbolism of femininity and masculinity arises (in whatever form it may take). One can indeed choose how to express their masculinity or their femininity, but one cannot choose whether they are masculine or

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[70] Karl Stern, *The Flight from Woman* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1985), 161-162.

[71] Dr. Paola S. Timiras, "The Reproductive System."

feminine. Their masculinity or femininity is inherent in their body at conception as male or female and cannot change. The nature of masculinity and femininity is expressed through the body as male and female. Trying to trick the mind or the body into becoming the opposite sex to express the opposite gender will always fail in its attempt.

Furthermore, one cannot change their sex through surgery since sex is determined at the core of our being-in-the-world from our conception. Surgery can only have cosmetic changes that affect the surface of the body. It then easily leads to confusion and harm since it is not aligned with the primordial mode of being-in-the-world as this body, whose meaning is given by nature, not chosen by the individual, and which already bears this meaning through its own revelation of masculinity or femininity at conception. Although we can choose how we express our gender, we cannot choose our gender because it is inseparably and necessarily linked to the sex of the body which we are as a subject-body situated in-the-world. Later on, we will have reason to discover a deeper meaning of sexuality than simply procreation, but for now, we are only noting this indispensable connection between bodily sex and gender.

n. who am I?

It is at this point of our investigation that we can attempt an initial answer to the question: Who am I? The short answer is that I am this consciousness, as a being-in-the-world, extended through this mind and this body. I define myself as this particular consciousness extended into space and time through this particular body-mind unity. We shall call this totality our *being-as-person*, although we will have further elements to add to it as we continue in our investigation, which is far from complete. I am my mind, body, and consciousness as a collective totality. But what is it that ties my consciousness to my particular mind and body? It is my form that is the ontological principle uniting these three aspects together as one person just as the form of a material object unites the phenomena in one substance. In the human person, we may also refer to this as the

soul.

Just as the unity of an object, with regard to its intelligibility, is prior to its individual parts, the same can be said of the human person. The unity of body, mind, and consciousness is prior to the individual parts of body, mind, and consciousness with regard to the intelligibility of the person. What is it that accounts for this primordial unity? We have said that it is the form of the person that gives this unity to the person. Furthermore, it is the form that is the life principle of the person, distinguishing them from a material object. If the form is uniting these various aspects of a person together, it is also the ontological act of life in the person. We may recall here the view of Aristotle that living beings have a form which is their animating principle (or soul).[72] Death is the removal of this life principle and the subsequent disintegration of the parts. There is no more unity, no more life; the only thing that remains is a corpse.

Someone might want to argue that it is the body, brain, or nervous system that acts as the unifying principle since my body gives rise to my mind and consciousness. Didn't we say that the body is our primordial situation as being-in-the-world? However, we have also seen that mind and consciousness are not reducible to the body, even though the body plays a fundamental role. I have a form as a whole living being that cannot be reducible to any part of myself.

We may also wonder why there doesn't have to be another mediating principle between soul, body, mind, and consciousness. In other words if the three parts need to be tied together by a unifying principle, don't we have to have another unifying principle tying soul to body? And if that's the case, aren't we faced with an infinite regress of unifying principles? However, because the soul is

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[72] He writes, "the *body* cannot be soul; the body is the subject or matter, not what is attributed to it. Hence the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it. But substance is actuality, and thus soul is the actuality of a body. . . we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: it is as meaningless to ask whether the wax and the shape given to it by the stamp are one." Aristotle, "On the Soul," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W.D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941), 412a19-22 and 412b6-8.

the *form* of the body, they are already ontologically united to each other without any mediation. This ontological union is immediate and doesn't require a further principle since it is the very form of the person and not a part. We will see in chapter 3, however, that this union of form and matter requires an act to keep them together but also that this act originates from outside of the person or object under consideration.

For now, we are simply noting that we cannot understand human existence without these three aspects of body, mind, and consciousness and that they are united together by the form of the person. Although one of them may not be operating at a particular time (for example, the mind during deep sleep), they still always have the potency to operate in the human person. We may now also answer the question of why I can continually identify myself with this mind and this body when they are always changing. If my mind and my body are always in flux, how can I identify them as a unity which belongs to me? The answer to this question lies, of course, in the ontological principle of my form which underlies all these accidental changes. It is the soul that provides the foundational basis for my awareness as a unified individual across time and in space, and it is the body that reveals soul. Just as the form of a material object is revealed by its phenomena, so the form of a person is revealed in their body. Since each person is a mind-body unity, our bodies carry within them the capacity to reveal ourselves to the world.

Additionally, let us consider the medical condition of transient global amnesia, where the patient's symptoms are complete and sudden short-term memory loss. The symptoms can last for up to twenty-four hours, and it is as if the patient's short-term memory resets itself every minute or so. It is frequently noted by medical providers that someone experiencing transient global amnesia will immediately want to know where they are and when they are. Once they receive these answers, and their short-term memory resets, they

again want to know their time and place.[73] Why? It is because space and time are the fundamental orientation for our being-in-the-world. As a conscious body-mind subject, it is space and time that orient the entire relationship of the world around us. In movies or novels where a character is unwittingly thrust through space-time, such as in *Star Trek*, they seek first to orient themselves to the new world through an understanding of their place and time. Space and time are the lived coordination of our being-in-the-world, and we use them as the thread to our own story, which is underlaid by our form. As human beings, we are situated in-the-world through these two extensions of mind and body, and it is through these extensions that the objects and events of the world revolve around us. It is how we make sense of our world.

Therefore, we can establish that the soul provides a fundamental unity for the person to know themselves as an individual since it is the ontological form underlying the connection of a particular consciousness to a particular mind and body. It is my form that combines them into a compact identity which I call "me". From the phenomenological reduction, then, we have determined at least two existents that are necessary for human existence, and these are, generally speaking, phenomena and consciousness. We have also been able to determine an objective ontological structure in all phenomena of the world and the roles of the body and the mind in our being-in-the-world. From our analysis of these roles, as well as their unity to an individual consciousness through our form (soul), we have been able to answer the question, generally, "who am I?", though much remains to be said later about this topic. In our next chapter, we will determine if there are any other existents that we can glean from our analysis of human experience.

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[73] Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich, "Loops," Radiolab, National Public Radio, February 21, 2019, WNYC Studios, New York, https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/radiolab-loops.

CHAPTER THREE – BEING

Up to now, we have established consciousness and phenomena as two existents that are assuredly given in human existence, comprising our being-in-the-world with mind and body, and we have examined them in detail. We will now attempt to see if we can identify anything else, and our search immediately indicates where to look next. If we have established these existents, then we must acknowledge that there is existence. We have noted in chapter one that *esse* (the act of being) is given in all perceptual experiences as part of the ontological structure of that perception. Substances exist.[1] Phenomena exist. Consciousness exists. Another way to put these statements is to say that there is being and that these existents have the act of being. This comes to us not through epistemological argumentation but through a phenomenological analysis of our experience as it reveals itself to us. Phenomena have the act of being because they exist, they show up for us, and they reveal the act of being of existing substances. The same is true with consciousness since it grasps the revelation. Therefore, human beings exist and also have the act of being.

Next, we must question whether or not being-as-being, that is to say being without a finite form, can be parsed out from the various kinds of being, such as phenomena, substances, and consciousness, that we have discovered thus far. What we mostly have overlooked in our analysis so far is being itself. We have established that existents have the act of being. But these existents cannot be the ontological foundation of their own existence. In other words, they cannot be their own *esse*. We will explore these existents, in turn, and inquire into the nature of their being to establish this further. In this chapter, our investigation will lead us to the very heart of being.

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[1] As stated in chapter one, physical substances are the union of form and matter and are revealed by their phenomena. They are part of the ontological structure given in perception. *Section f* of this chapter will deal with substances in greater detail. We saw in chapter two that there must be a world of physical substances outside of ourselves that we engage with in order for us to have our being-in-the-world.

But before we begin, let us note the reason for this. At the level of phenomena and consciousness, we can indeed explain everything we need to have a practical existence. We can do science, mathematics, and art, and we have a pragmatic basis for going about our day-to-day living. Therefore, practically speaking, we can go on with our life by simply describing phenomenologically what is happening. We may very well wonder if we should simply be content at this point. Why push the envelope any further? Although we have established enough to philosophically explain the pragmatics of human existence, we have not come close to reaching the depth of what it means to be human. We have not, for example, approached an answer to our initial interrogation into the value or absurdity of life. Nor have we answered the many other questions that set us out on this path. We are only at the very beginning of answering those questions, and therefore, it is the current lack of response to our most pressing questions that spurs our search onward into being-itself.

a. can phenomena be their own being?

We will begin by analyzing the ontological foundation of phenomena to determine if they can be responsible for their own existence. It will assist us to begin by rehashing some of the basic discoveries that we made concerning the nature of phenomena. First of all, we will note that phenomena do not exist inside or outside of consciousness. They do not exist inside of consciousness because consciousness is pure awareness and cannot contain phenomena in the way that a box contains toys. There is no "inside" of consciousness which could contain the phenomena. Furthermore, consciousness is directed towards the phenomena as objects which are outside of it and in profile. But we should not let that trick us into thinking that phenomena are external existents that have their being separate from consciousness. We must recall that phenomena only exist *as appearances* to consciousness. Because they are nothing more than perceptions, phenomena would not exist if they were not perceived. They require consciousness for their existence.

We should not think of phenomena as floating in some empty space waiting to be apprehended by consciousness. Although we have noted that there is an ontological structure of form, matter, and *esse* revealed by the phenomena, here we are only concerned with the phenomena themselves.

We should also recall that phenomena have potentiality in the sense that further phenomena are promised by the indefinite background given to non-thetic consciousness. Thetic consciousness, which views objects in profile, is also promised the potentiality of further phenomena if it moves around the object to perceive it from a different angle. However, *without a consciousness to perceive them, phenomena have no actuality.* Their actuality comes from the presence of a consciousness. Phenomena exist solely as perceptions and cannot be thought of as existing "outside" of consciousness if by that we mean that they have an independent existence regardless of their appearance to a perceiver. This would be absurd because we would then have to account for an unperceived perception, which is impossible.

The second aspect of the nature of phenomena that we will currently note is that substances are revealed by their phenomena. We cannot know the existence of a corporeal entity unless we experience its phenomena in some way. If we ask what the difference is between this lamp that we see and the phenomenon of the lamp, we answer that there is not any difference. The lamp is the totality of its phenomena united by its form. What we are now asking is: what is the ontological foundation of the existence of phenomenal experience as a whole? How can phenomena be held in potentiality when they are not perceived? What gives rise to their *esse*? In other words, this whole phenomenal experience that I am experiencing at this moment exists. There can be no doubt. But *what is its existence*? How does it have the act of being? Can it be its own being? Is the being of the phenomenon a phenomenon?

To the last question, we may be tempted to say, "Yes, it is." Yet, one cannot point to a phenomenon and say, "that phenomenon *is* being" or "that phenomenon *is esse.*" We cannot point to the act of being and say "there it is! It is right there!" Being is itself

unobservable, yet it is the foundation of all observation. If we are to attempt to maintain that being is merely the phenomena, then it should be possible to perceive being as a phenomenon. If this were true, we should not be able to distinguish between the phenomenon and its being. Its being should then be an observable phenomenon in and of itself. But such a phenomenon of being cannot be experienced because it does not exist. Being is not perceivable as a phenomenon.

We might, at this point, be tempted to say that the existence of the phenomenon is self-evident by the fact that it appears and its existence explains itself by appearing. But this is an unacceptable explanation since the fact that *it is* does not explain *how it is that it is*. We are asking: what is the being of the phenomenon? How does a phenomenon have *esse*? What is the basis of its existence? Our answer cannot be that it exists *because* it appears and therefore its being is its appearance. Or, see it exists right here, right now, and its appearance is its existence. This answer is merely a dodge that confuses our original question. Certainly, we do admit that phenomena exist and that *the fact* of their existence is revealed to us by their appearance to consciousness. However, this cannot satisfy us in our original question because it does not explain *what accounts for the being of the phenomenon*. The act of being of the phenomenon cannot be the phenomenon itself. Phenomena cannot be their own *esse* because, as we have noted, there would be no phenomenon without consciousness experiencing them.

It follows that phenomena cannot be the foundation of their own being because *they are contingent upon consciousness* to be experienced. As we have noted, without being perceived, they have no actuality. If we believe that phenomena are their own existence, then we must believe that there are phenomena floating in some objective space that exists without being perceived. But this idea is contradictory to the nature of a phenomenon as a perception. We cannot admit of an unperceived perception. In addition, because the act of being is not itself an appearance, it cannot be directly observed by consciousness as phenomena can. Lastly, even though we admit the potentiality of discovering more phenomena if we continue

further observation of determinable substances, this potentiality remains unactualized until the phenomena are perceived. A phenomenon is nothing more than an appearance to consciousness. Therefore, the phenomenon cannot be its own act of being. There is an ontological difference between the phenomenon and its act of being.

Following this line of argument, we must further question whether a faculty of the mind, such as imagination, sustains phenomena in their being. But we noted in the previous chapter that the faculties of the mind are phenomena, analogical to the skeletal structure of the body. Under normal circumstances, I do not notice my bones just as I do not notice my imagination. They are part of who I am as a subject-body-mind. However, when I reflect on them as objects of my consciousness, they appear as objects just as other phenomena do. It follows that the faculties of the mind, as phenomena, cannot exist without consciousness, and therefore, they cannot sustain themselves in existence or create the phenomena of the world in an unconscious act. Why they cannot sustain themselves in existence as phenomena is plain based on our foregoing analysis. Their existence is dependent on consciousness.

Furthermore, if the imagination could create the phenomena of the world, then consciousness would be able to utilize this faculty to remove these same phenomena from existence, but this cannot be done. If we compare this with an object inside our imagination, we notice this difference. In the imagination, we can manipulate our intentional object in any way we wish, but in the world, it is not so. Todes notes that, "perception is of something encountered in our actual experience *in* the world. Imagination is of something entertained merely in our own imagination, and not in the world."[2] Only the body can alter the phenomena of the world because the body, and not the mind, is extended through space as a material subject in-the-world. The mind and the body, although they can influence each other in that they are both phenomena of a unified subject, cannot ontologically establish each other's existence for

[2] Todes, *Body and World*, 138.

they are different extensions into the structure of the phenomena – the body as corporeal and the mind as incorporeal. The faculties of the mind, therefore, cannot hold the phenomena of the world in existence. This same point was noted in our analysis of the primordial role of the body in chapter two.

Before moving on to the next section of this chapter, we must be clear that we are setting aside the notions of matter, form, and substances at this time, but we will return to them later to see what their role is in explaining the act of being, in general. For now, we are looking solely at whether or not phenomena can be their own act of being, and we must answer in the negative since they are dependent upon consciousness for their existence. Next, we will examine whether or not consciousness can explain the *esse* of the phenomena that we experience.

b. can consciousness be the being of phenomena?

We may next be tempted to think that consciousness can explain the existence of phenomena through an unconscious or even non-thetic act of creation. This would be somewhat similar to Kant's view of the mind as the constitution of representations of objects.[3] We could try to hold the position that consciousness is the foundation that maintains the being of the phenomenon. So, we must inquire whether or not consciousness can be the being of the phenomenon. At first, it seems so. But a closer examination reveals that it cannot be. The only relation between consciousness and a phenomenon is perceiver-perceived. As we have earlier discovered,

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[3] Kant states, "what we meant to say was this, that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomena; that things which we see are not by themselves what we see, nor their relations by themselves such as they appear to us, so that, if we drop our subject or the subjective form of our senses, all qualities, all relations of objects in space and time, nay space and time themselves, would vanish. They cannot, as phenomena, exist by themselves, but in us only." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 11. Although we have already dismissed Kant's transcendental idealism in chapter two through our analysis of the active body, it remains for us to see whether consciousness, rather than the mind, could explain the being of the phenomenon.

consciousness is pure awareness. We have also earlier discovered that phenomena are not contained within consciousness. To now believe that consciousness is the being of the phenomenon, we would have to believe that consciousness goes outside of itself to be the ontological foundation of that which it perceives. If we are to state that consciousness is the being of that which it perceives, then we would essentially be stating that consciousness is perceiving its own being, and that is what phenomena are. Or stated differently, under this view, phenomena are consciousness perceiving its own existence. Again, this is absurd. Since consciousness is pure awareness, it cannot be a phenomenon to itself. Nor can being be a phenomenon, as we have stated previously. Therefore, we must acknowledge that consciousness cannot perceive itself as a phenomenon, and even if it could, it certainly would not be a phenomenal perception like we experience.

So, consciousness cannot position itself to be the being of the phenomenon that it experiences. It cannot be the foundation of phenomena in this way. Nor can consciousness explain the being of phenomena by holding them in existence from a distance to itself. This is because the phenomena that are given to us in profile, as we noted in chapter one, have an infinite expression of possible appearances to consciousness, and consciousness cannot give these possible appearances to phenomena while still maintaining its ignorance of them. For example, it was noted earlier that any object which appears to me always appears from a certain vantage point. We also know that this vantage point can change. Again, the number of times and ways in which I can view any particular object are limitless, but I cannot view the object from all vantage points at once. Consciousness must perceive its object in profile and cannot perceive it as all of its phenomena simultaneously.

Based on these previous observations, it would be ridiculous to hold the position that consciousness is responsible for the being of the phenomenon. If the being of the phenomenon came from consciousness, then consciousness would have to simultaneously hold the phenomenon as it appears, in profile, while at the same time hiding from itself the other possible appearances of the object.

Consciousness would have to reach outside of itself to give the phenomenon its act of being while remaining distinct from, and at a vantage point to, the phenomenon. Furthermore, consciousness would have to do all of this while concurrently accounting for the "hidden" side of the phenomenon which can be revealed by changing the vantage point of consciousness to the phenomenon. To hold such a position would be nonsensical.

Consciousness, then, cannot create phenomena, perceive itself as phenomena, or be the being of phenomena. The reasons for these conclusions are found in the nature of consciousness and phenomena themselves. Consciousness is subjective awareness and phenomena are perceptions. Awareness cannot create or sustain phenomena in their existence. Its essence is simply to be aware. Furthermore, even if consciousness *could* create or sustain phenomena, they would have to be fully present within consciousness. That is to say, they would have to exist inside of consciousness as its contents. Again, we have noted that this is not compatible with the nature of consciousness, phenomena, or our experience.

We can conclude, then, that there must be another existent given in human existence, which is neither a phenomenon nor a consciousness, and have established its existence from an analysis of the being of the phenomenon. We will, in *section f* of this chapter look into the possibility of substances, matter, and form that could account for the *esse* of the phenomena. But before we do that, we may wonder if a similar conclusion can be made concerning consciousness. We will now turn to interrogate the being of consciousness. Just as we asked whether or not phenomena can found their own existence, we will ask whether or not consciousness can found its own existence. For this, we must return to our original analysis of consciousness. We said that the essence of consciousness is a plenum of awareness and that we know this awareness exists through a grasping of its essence as a subject through the reflective mind. We also said that consciousness is not a nothingness and has being-as-consciousness. Is consciousness its own being?

c. can consciousness be its own being?

For consciousness to be its own being, we would have to discover an ontological mechanism by which it sustains itself in its existence. We also have to see if there is a process by which it could create itself to establish its own being. But to hold that consciousness creates itself to establish its own being, we would have to hold that consciousness pre-exists itself. Consciousness would have to be prior to itself to create itself. We cannot maintain such a position. It is contradictory to hold that any existent exists prior to itself, and so we cannot take the position that consciousness is its own being by self-creation. But even if consciousness cannot pre-exist itself to create itself, we must still examine if it is possible to sustain itself in existence, even if we do not know the cause of that existence.

We will recall here the relationship between consciousness and phenomena. Consciousness always has an intentional object. It is aware of this texture, this sight, this sound, this taste, this smell. It is also self-aware. But if consciousness were devoid of every phenomenon, including both phenomena of the world and phenomena of the mind, we may wonder what would become of it. In this situation, it could not take a phenomenon as its object. We may suppose that it could be self-aware, but it would not have anything to be self-aware of. Consider, for instance, a consciousness that is taking a candle as its object. It is aware of the candle, and it is aware of itself as awareness of the candle. As we noted in the second chapter, this is not due to a nothingness that separates consciousness from itself, but because of subjective self-identity which is a plenum of a single awareness. This consciousness, then, is awareness-of-itself-as-awareness-of-the-candle in a single unity of awareness that is not distinguishable from itself. Now that we understand this, we can do a thought experiment to determine what would happen if all phenomena were taken away from a consciousness. In our example, if the candle were removed from existence, and this consciousness had nothing else to hold onto as an object, what would happen to this consciousness? It could have no

intentional object, so it would become awareness-of-itself-as-awareness-of-nothing.

We must break this down into two parts. First, awareness-of-nothing (thetic), and second, awareness-of-itself-as, or self-awareness (non-thetic). To begin, an awareness of nothing would be nothing. We cannot separate the intentional object (as a perceived phenomenon) from the thetic awareness of that object.[4] The act of being thetically aware of the candle-as-phenomenon, for instance, cannot be separated from the phenomenon of the candle. The thetic awareness and the phenomenon are joined together in one unified perception, and they cannot be split from each other to exist on their own terms. Although they remain ontologically distinct from each other as phenomenon and consciousness, we cannot separate them in practice since, as we have established, perception cannot exist without a perceiver and something perceived. If a thetic consciousness exists, then there must be *something* that is perceived. One cannot imagine a perception of nothingness, and this brings us back to our point.

There is no way to separate consciousness from phenomena while keeping them intact as existents. If there is no object (i.e. nothingness as an object) then there could only be a thetic consciousness of nothingness. Thetic consciousness of nothingness, however, is indistinguishable from nothingness. On the other hand, thetic consciousness of the candle-as-phenomenon is the candle-perception. Consciousness of the candle *is* a perception of the candle. Consciousness of nothingness *is* nothingness. The difference between the two lies in the fact that nothingness, unlike the candle, cannot be a phenomenon-object for consciousness. Therefore, consciousness cannot be an awareness of it. In a word, thetic consciousness of nothingness is no longer thetic

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[4] We can, of course, distinguish between the object as a total series of potential appearances, united by a form, which is transcendent of consciousness, and the consciousness of the object. But here we are only concerned with the object as a perceived phenomenon, which is identifiable with the consciousness of it. We cannot separate the phenomenon from the consciousness of that phenomenon without destroying both in the process.

consciousness. It is nothing because there is no perception. It dissipates as light into unending darkness. We may further consider the states of dreamless sleep or coma in which there is no perception for consciousness to hold onto. They pass by as nothingness without any intentional object or any awareness.

We must turn now to our second part of this analysis and determine what to make of a consciousness that is awareness-of-itself-as-awareness-of-nothing. We have already noted that thetic consciousness of nothing is nothing since there is no phenomenon for it to perceive, so we can reformulate our statement as awareness-of-itself-as-nothing. We immediately see the problem. Consciousness cannot be aware of itself as a nothingness. If we are to hold that consciousness could be aware of itself as nothingness, with no intentional object, then we would have to postulate that this nothingness can be non-thetically grasped by the self-awareness of consciousness. But we have already determined that to be aware of nothingness is to be aware of no object at all since thetic consciousness cannot have nothingness as its intentional object. We must recall that thetic and non-thetic consciousness are not separated from each other but form one unity of consciousness. If thetic consciousness cannot take nothingness as its object, then neither can non-thetic consciousness since they form the same unified plenum of awareness.

Consciousness requires an object, and nothingness cannot fulfill this requirement. Nor can thetic consciousness take non-thetic consciousness for its intentional object in an awareness of itself as an awareness of itself. This would mean that consciousness could turn back on itself to fully grasp itself as an object, which, as was shown in chapter two, is impossible since it is a pure subject. Consciousness only knows its own awareness through its encounter with the world of phenomena. From this, we can conclude that self-awareness of nothingness is indistinguishable from nothingness and cannot be consciousness.

We have discovered, then, that consciousness requires a phenomenal object for its existence and cannot sustain its own being, since, if it could sustain its own being, it would be self-sufficient and

would not require an intentional object. Or if we prefer, consciousness *is contingent* upon phenomena for its existence. If there is no phenomenon, then there is no perception, and if there is no perception, there is no consciousness. From the foregoing analysis, we can conclude that consciousness cannot be the ontological foundation of its own existence because it is pure awareness. As pure awareness, it cannot create or sustain its existence because, as we have noted, without phenomena, consciousness is void of any content to hold onto. It falls away into nothingness. Consciousness, therefore, cannot be its own being.

d. can phenomena be the being of consciousness?

Lastly, there is one more alternative that must be analyzed, no matter how easily it may be dismissed. It could be the case that phenomena are the existents that create or sustain the being of consciousness. Upon reflection on this option, however, we will immediately find that phenomena cannot be the being of consciousness, and the reasons for this are obvious. Phenomena exist only as appearances and cannot create awareness of themselves. Such an act would require them to exist prior to consciousness, which is impossible because they are perceptions. We have already established that perceptions cannot exist prior to the perceiver, so it follows that, if they cannot pre-exist consciousness, then they cannot be that which creates consciousness.

Furthermore, they cannot sustain the existence of consciousness. It is certainly true that consciousness cannot exist without an object, as we have noted, but it is equally true that phenomena themselves cannot sustain the being of consciousness. If they could, we would have to hold that phenomena, which are not contained in consciousness, reach outside of themselves to hold the being of consciousness in existence, while remaining at a distance from consciousness. This would, again, require phenomena to sustain the existence of consciousness while simultaneously remaining separate from consciousness. That is, phenomena would have to become the being of the awareness of themselves in profile.

But phenomena are not capable of acting upon consciousness in such a way as to sustain its being because they are passively dependent upon consciousness for their existence.

It follows that phenomena cannot be the being of awareness since they cannot exist without awareness. As external objects of consciousness, phenomena cannot then reach outside of themselves to sustain the being of an awareness of themselves. By their nature, they remain passive objects perceived by awareness, incapable of being the being of awareness of themselves. If it is consciousness that brings phenomena from potentiality to actuality, then it cannot also be phenomena that give the act of being to consciousness. Rather, we have come to see that c*onsciousness and phenomena are mutually contingent on each other*. Because phenomena are dependent upon consciousness for their existence, they cannot sustain the act of being of consciousness. Instead, consciousness and phenomena, as perceiver and perceived, create an ontologically interdependent system.

e. can the phenomenon-consciousness dyad be its own being?

Before continuing, it will be beneficial for us to review our previous conclusions. First, we noted that phenomena cannot be their own being. Second, we noted that consciousness cannot be the being of the phenomenon. Third, we noted that consciousness cannot be its own being. Lastly, we noted that phenomena cannot be the being of consciousness. We must, then, investigate the being of this consciousness-phenomena system.

We may agree with Heidegger that being-in-the-world as a whole is ontologically foundational to the intelligibility of the existents of consciousness and phenomenon.[5] But we immediately find that the system cannot be ontologically explained from within itself from the viewpoint of causality. This is due to the contingency

[5] For instance, he states that, "knowing is a mode of Dasein founded upon Being-in-the-world. Thus Being-in-the-world, as a basic state, must be Interpreted *beforehand*." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 90. Similarly, we are stating that it is the consciousness-phenomena system which gives rise to knowing.

of the two existents (i.e. phenomena and consciousness) which make up the consciousness-phenomena dyad. Although the *intelligibility* of consciousness and phenomena is founded upon the dyad as a whole, the ontological *causality* of the dyad is founded upon consciousness and phenomena as separate existents.[6] Without the existents of phenomena and consciousness, there would be no dyad, but without the dyad, there would be no intelligibility of phenomena and consciousness.

Let us put it another way. The intelligibility of consciousness and phenomena cannot exist without the consciousness-phenomena dyad; the consciousness-phenomena dyad cannot exist without consciousness and phenomena; phenomena cannot exist without consciousness; consciousness cannot exist without phenomena. If we examine these statements, we find that the consciousness-phenomena dyad cannot be the ontological foundation of its own causality because it is made up of the contingent existents of consciousness and phenomena. Although phenomena and consciousness are intertwined in their existence, as we have seen, reflection shows that they are separate existents. Therefore, although they form an interdependent system of experience, they cannot ontologically found this system because they cannot ontologically found themselves or each other. This consciousness-phenomena dyad is itself contingent upon two contingent existents. But if this perceiver-perceived system were its own being, it would not have any contingency found within it.

Even if we were to postulate this system as its own being, it

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[6] Heidegger states that, "the world itself is not an entity within-the-world; and yet it is so determinative for such entities that only in so far as 'there is' a world can they be encountered and show themselves, in their Being, as entities which have been discovered." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 102. We take this to mean that, the world, as made up of separate entities, is causally foundational for being-in-the-world. However, being-in-the-world gives rise to the intelligibility of that world. This interpretation is supported by his analysis of the relationship between readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand. He states, "*Readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are 'in themselves' are defined ontologico-categorially*. Yet only by reason of something present-at-hand, 'is there' anything ready-to-hand." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 101.

still could not account for the being of the existents which make up its components. In a word, the dyad itself could not be the being of phenomena or the being of consciousness since it is itself only this system (consciousness-phenomena) as a unified experience. It cannot go outside of itself, therefore, to be the ontological foundation of the existents which make up this system, for then it would no longer be identifiable with itself. Since the dyad is dependent upon consciousness-phenomena interaction, it cannot also be the being of consciousness, as an individual existent, and be the being of the phenomenon, as an individual existent. In other words, it cannot be the being of those existents which it is dependent upon. If it were, it would be outside of itself as a system, sustaining itself in its existence, by being the being of consciousness and phenomena, which is impossible. The consciousness-phenomena dyad cannot sustain the being of consciousness or phenomena because it is already ontologically contained within the interaction of these existents.

From the foregoing, then, we can conclude that the system of perceiver-perceived is incomplete since it cannot be its own being. The dyad which they form remains contingent upon another existent (or other existents), which can be neither consciousness nor phenomena. The cause of the act of being of this system, therefore, is an existent distinct from the system itself because phenomena and consciousness cannot be their own being, as we have shown. And this makes perfect sense when we consider the role of the active body in our engagement with the world. There must be, at the very least, a material world underlying our perceptual experience. Henceforth, we must add some other kind of existent to our understanding of human reality, and we cannot postulate that this other existent is a phenomenon, a consciousness, or the consciousness-phenomena system itself, for the reasons we have stated.

f. can substance or noumena be the being of the dyad?

We may next look to matter, form, and substance, to provide

us with an existent which could be the being of the phenomena-consciousness dyad. We may also examine the Kantian idea of the noumenon to see whether or not it contains any explanatory power for the being of this unity. To begin, we note that what we immediately perceive is phenomena. But, as we discovered in chapter one, the objects that we perceive have an ontological structure that sustains them. Their series of appearances is their essence, which for physical objects, includes both matter and form. The matter is the ontological principle that accounts for their potentiality and changeability, as well as the differentiation between multiple objects with the same form. The form is the ontological principle that unites the appearances into one object. The *esse* is the act of being of the object in that it exists as revealed by the phenomena. Lastly, the substance is the whole totality of essence, matter, form, and *esse* in a single object. However, due to what we discovered in the first chapter, we can dispense with the idea of the noumenon of an object, such as a candle. We can do this by simply asking: what is the noumenon of the candle? Kant's noumena cannot themselves be phenomena, as he claims, so what are they? What are we to make of the idea of noumena which are, by definition, unperceivable in-themselves and do not appear in the ontological structure of phenomena?

We cannot answer these questions since we could only know noumena through perception. We cannot know noumena as distinguished from phenomena or as part of the ontological structure of the phenomena. While noumena are unknowable by Kant's admission,[7] matter, form, and substance are knowable because they are necessarily given in the phenomena. In other words, we cannot conceive of what noumena are, but we can conceive of matter, form,

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[7] He says, "even if we could impart the highest degree of clearness to our intuition, we should not come one step nearer to the nature of objects by themselves. We should know our mode of intuition, i.e. our sensibility, more completely, but always under the indefeasible conditions of space and time. What the objects are by themselves [the noumena] would never become known to us, even through the clearest knowledge of that which alone is given us, the phenomenon." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 11.

and substance because they are revealed by the phenomena. We should not think that we can lift the phenomena to peek underneath it like a rug to find noumena holding it all together like metaphysical glue. When it comes to the material world, it is revealed to us by its appearances, as we have shown. We cannot use Kant's noumena as metaphysical fillers to stuff the void that we created in seeking the foundation of the consciousness-phenomena dyad.

But, on the other hand, we will be tempted to see substances as that foundation. We know, for instance, that substances have *esse,* and so they can form a basis upon which the phenomena-consciousness dyad can be built. This is intuitive because, as we noted in the last chapter, the active body reveals a pre-existing, stable world. However, it will soon become clear that substances, including the body, place us in the same situation as when we were analyzing the ontological foundation of phenomena or consciousness. We must ask: if substances have *esse*, then from where do they receive their act of being? They cannot receive their act of being from phenomena or consciousness. That much is clear based on our preceding discussions. Additionally, substances cannot receive their being from themselves. Such an idea would mean that they would have to sustain their own *esse*. This cannot be the case; otherwise, they would be eternal, and our experience shows us the opposite.

Again, substances are revealed, not hidden, by the phenomena. In a certain sense, substances *ar*e phenomena because their individual essence is the totality of the series of appearances. Granted, we may be mistaken about what a substance is because we cannot see its whole essence at once, as mentioned in chapter one. However, we come to know them only through our perception of them and our bodily engagement with them. They are not hidden behind the phenomena. It is phenomena that reveal mistakes about the identity of a substance and correct them. Just so, we can also come to know that substances are destroyed through our experience, such as when a cloud dissipates into the air. When referring to material substances, the popular saying that "nothing lasts forever" is quite true. However, if substances were their own *esse* then they

could never be destroyed since their being would be self-sustained. So, substances cannot be their own ontological foundation since they are contingent upon circumstances. They would have to receive their act of being from another being. What is it, then, that sustains them in existence if they cannot sustain their own existence?

Perhaps, then, we could try to posit potentially perceivable substances, such as a group of eternal particles, that sustains and explains the act of being of all substances, as well as their own. But we must ask if this is possible. In this case, the *esse* of these particles would have to belong to their form. If their *esse* were ontologically separate from their own form, then they would not be capable of sustaining their own existence because they would have to receive their act of being from something else. On the other hand, if their *esse* did belong to their own form, then we would have to explain how that is the case. It is contradictory to think that finite beings can contain an unlimited act of being in their form since their form is finite.[8]

We must recall that the form is the ontological principle uniting the phenomena of any entity. The *esse* is the act of being of the entity. It should be clear that *esse* can never arise within the form of an object since its finite form would then have to self-contain an infinite act of being. But it is an impossibility for a finite form to contain infinite being. Furthermore, this would require that the finite form be ontologically more fundamental than *esse* to account for the self-actualization of its own *esse*. It is *esse*, however, which ontologically gives rise to the act of being of the finite form of an entity so that it can be perceivable. We cannot reverse this situation. Form cannot exist without *esse*, but it is conceptually possible for *esse* to exist without form. Therefore, we should note that *esse* is ontologically more fundamental than form. Since the

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[8] The finiteness of their form is evident from the fact that, no matter how we imagine this eternal particle to be, at least some of Aristotle's categories would apply to it. These are, "quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action [in a finite sense that is not the infinite act of being-itself], or affection." Aristotle, "Organon," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W.D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941), 1b26-27.

form cannot give rise to the *esse* of these hypothetical particles, and since a finite form cannot contain an infinite act of being, their act of being must be received from another existent. At this point, we would be faced with an infinite regress of substances, which we will turn to as a potential explanation a little further on in this section.

Let us now return to our analysis of the noumenon. There is consciousness. There are phenomena. There are essences. There are substances. There is existence. Where do we experience a noumenon? We do not and cannot because, *if we did, it would be revealed by the phenomenon*. The concept of the noumenon is incompatible with the world as we experience it. The world is revealed by phenomena. The noumenon, on the other hand, is not consciousness, is unperceivable, is not part of the ontological structure of phenomena, and is entirely unobservable in its properties. It is not extended through space or time, since it would then be perceivable as a phenomenon. What is it then? In concept, it is indistinguishable from existence-itself. If we are to conceive of something that exists, which is not a phenomenon, not a consciousness, not the consciousness-phenomena dyad, not a substance, unperceivable, unobservable in its properties, not extended through space, and not extended through time, what have we conceived of other than existence-itself? Additionally, existence is already a given in human experience, but the noumenon is not. But let us explore further.

Even if we could somehow establish that a noumenal reality exists separate from the phenomena-consciousness dyad, we do not solve our original problem. We would then have to ask, what is the being of this noumenon? Can it be its own being? Is it its own existence? Assuming that we could even know what this noumenon is, we could still make an ontological distinction between the noumenon and the being of the noumenon, just as we did in our analysis of the eternal particle. We can always make an ontological distinction between the form of an object and its act of being. Furthermore, any finite form cannot be the self-cause of its own act of being, as we have established. Hence, we would have no conceivable reason to postulate it as its own being, and we would be

forced to conclude that it was contingent in its being. It would remain for us a contingent existent, which, like consciousness or phenomena, would be incapable of sustaining its own being. Ontology, therefore, would still require us to dig deeper to find that which is the foundation of the being of the noumenon.

So, even if we posit a noumenal reality as the being of the perception dyad, we are on the verge of an infinite regress of contingencies, just as with the eternal particle. Granted, an infinite series of noumena could explain each contingent being found within that series, but let us not forget that we have no conception of what even one of these noumena could be. We do know, however, what they could *not* be, as stated previously, and this made them indistinguishable from existence-itself. Are we then to posit an infinite regress of finite, contingent beings of which we have no possible understanding or conception of any single one? On what grounds? What is to differentiate one of these finite beings from another? It cannot be space, time, or appearance. It follows that we cannot even conceptualize how one of these noumenal existents would distinguish itself from another one to form a small, finite series of contingencies, let alone an infinite series (the being of the being of the being of the being of, *ad infinitum*). The supposed series, therefore, in concept, would collapse back into one noumenal being, indistinguishable from existence-itself.

This is because, even if we assume their existence, we cannot have any experience of noumenal objects, and therefore, we have no reason to admit their existence except as empty metaphysical fillers of which we can know nothing (since they are, by definition, unobservable as phenomena) and which cannot be differentiated one from another (assuming there can even be multiples of them). On the other hand, *the act of being is already given in human experience* since experience is impossible without existence. We may state, then, that first, since we cannot conceive of what a noumenal being would be as distinct from existence-itself, and second, because a supposed infinite series of contingent noumenal existents would be, in reality, indistinguishable from each other, thereby failing to form a series, and third, because existence-itself is already given in human

experience, we are inclined to name being-as-being as the missing existent that ontologically supports all other existents.

However, before we finalize our conclusion, we must also examine the infinite regress of particle substances that we postulated earlier in this section. On the surface, it seems to be a different situation than the noumena since, unlike the noumena, these particles would be conceivably observable substances and would thus be easily differentiated from being-itself. Yet, there is a very similar problem with positing this infinite regress. To see it, let us return to a particular phenomenon, for instance, a painting. When I encounter this particular painting, I encounter a finite being. Granted, the series of appearances is potentially infinite, as we stated in chapter one. However, this is not because the painting is an infinite being, but because I am viewing it from a particular vantage point in a particular space and at a particular time. Everything about the painting betrays its finitude. It is within the boundaries of a frame, it utilizes these colors and not others, it is painted with oil paints and not others, it is in this room and not another, it is done on this subject matter and not another, it was painted at this time and not another, and so on. Everywhere the finitude of its being reveals itself to me.[9] And yet, are we going to posit an infinite regress of substance-particles to provide an ontological account for the sustenance of the *esse* of a finite being? On the surface, it seems absurd to do so, but let us examine this further.

When we begin to examine these substance-particles (atoms, electrons, quarks, and so on) that make up the painting, we quickly hit a wall only a few steps in. If we posit an infinite regress such as this, there will always be substance-particles that will remain unobservable. This is because, no matter how many we observe, no matter how small we go, there will always be another that is smaller and unobserved. It is like trying to count to infinity. There will

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[9] Concerning this point, Todes states, "there are in fact minimal or simple perceivable parts of all objects in perceptual space . . . the basis for the comprehensibility of finitely divisible perceptual objects lies in the comprehensibility of finitely delimitable perceptual space." Todes, *Body and World*, 249.

always be specific numbers that have not been counted and remain out of reach. The task is impossible. And when we apply this same principle to the infinite regress of substance-particles, we realize that we are not in any better situation than we were with the infinite regress of noumena. We cannot observe them, and we have no idea what their properties may be. And, if we cannot guess at the nature of their properties, we cannot guess at their existence. Once again, as in the case of noumena, we are left with empty metaphysical placeholders that we can, in principle, know nothing about since at least some of them will always remain unobservable. Additionally, if we can know nothing about them, there is no basis for which to posit properties that the substances may possess to make them differentiated from each other. And if this is the case, we have no reason to posit an infinite series. For the foregoing reasons, to put forth an infinite regress of substance-particles as a possible ontological foundation for the *esse* of a finite being seems untenable based upon our experience.

And yet, another question may be raised here. Why, after all, do we need a reason for a contingent being to exist the way that it does? Cannot the union of matter, form, and *esse* be the product of random occurrence, particularly at the level of sub particles? But then, if this were so, how could a random substructure of particles give rise to the consistent stable structure of a world that is habitable? The world of experience, as we have shown in chapter two is stable and consistent, allowing for bodily life. If things were really founded, at the base level of existence, on random occurrences, it would seem that such stability and consistency in our world of experience would be impossible. Doesn't this fact make it seem as though these "random occurrences" could only appear to be so because we wouldn't understand the underlying pattern of their behavior?

These questions boil down to whether or not we accept the principle of sufficient reason. There is also the related question of whether or not something can come from nothing. There seems to be no proving these points. We are here at the heart of the questions that plagued our thoughts in the introduction, although we are

finding them in a different form. At the bottom of everything will we find chaos (such as quantum particles acting randomly, popping in and out of existence without rhyme or reason) or order (being-in-itself)?[10] This is the key question upon which the rest of the book hinges, and it appears to be the most dubious.

If I answer that we find being-in-itself, it is because we experience patterns at every level of perceptual, lived existence. Everything that is immediately observable to us seems to follow discoverable patterns with reasons for their existence. We simply don't experience chaos as the dominant feature of the lived world, but rather intelligibility and order. Quantum mechanics may seem to indicate that, at the micro level of being, there is only randomness and that particles can appear and disappear for seemingly no reason. But again, it may just be that the underlying patterns and reasons have yet to be revealed to us.[11] We must also acknowledge that our lived experience as engaged material subjects in-the-world indicates that the world is ultimately intelligible, full of patterns and reasons all the way down.

Furthermore, the existence of being-as-being is something that we may experience in a transcendent way. Although this goes outside the pure mode of reason, there does seem to be transcendent experiences that point to a Being that is the fullness of being – that is to say – infinite being, or a being whose form is *esse*. This is especially true in moments of beauty, meaning, and purpose. We seem to be surrounded and held in existence by a being whose being is Being – a being that gives these transcendental qualities to human

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[10] Although, it must also be acknowledged that these particles do not actually come into existence from nothing, but rather from pre-existing energetic fields. Lee Billings, "6 Times Quantum Physics Blew Our Minds in 2022," *Scientific* American, December 19, 2022, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/6-times-quantum-physics-blew-our-minds-in-2022/. We have not actually observed something coming into existence from true nothingness.

[11] Consider, for example, the fact that not all physicists agree that quantum mechanics is truly random. We are still looking for explanations. Miriam Frankel, "Is quantum theory really as random as it seems?," *NewScientist*, August 25, 2021, https://www.newscientist.com/article/2288232-is-quantum-theory-really-as-random-as-it-seems/

existence. Here we are appealing to a sort of experience that goes beyond the empirical and touches upon faith. Doubtless, this will remain a place where skeptics can hold their ground, yet it can also become the place of assent to the penetration of the transcendent.

For our purposes, and for the reasons stated above, we will henceforth hold that there is no infinite regress of finite substances to sustain the being of perceptual objects, that there are no noumenal realities, that the principle of sufficient reason holds at the subatomic level, and that the *esse* of individual substances requires a being that is not finite in its form as their foundation. Therefore, with all other alternatives exhausted, we will name being-as-being as the missing existent for which we are searching. This conclusion is reached from our examination of the natures of consciousness and phenomena, as well as our postulation of other substances or noumena as the possible missing existent. We have come to being-as-being is the ontological foundation of phenomena and consciousness. That is to say, phenomena, substances, and consciousness cannot be the foundation of their own existence. Since they cannot be the being of their own act of being, and with the alternatives of infinite regress, random substructures, and noumenal realities exhausted, we have arrived at the existence of being-as-being. Being-as-being is the only being that can contain infinite *esse* to sustain all finite beings because it is itself not limited by a finite form. It is that which provides the ontological foundation for the existence and the potentiality of all finite beings.

There is no need, at this point, to think in terms of causation or creation. We are simply noting that finite existents seem to necessitate a being which is being-itself, and this we have called being-as-being. Consciousness, substances, and phenomena cannot exist without having the act of being, and being-as-being is the ontological foundation of their being. Our investigation has not led us to the mere concept of being-itself, but to the reality of being-itself as existing Being. If we have come to the real existence of being-as-being it is only because we have inquired into a real, already existing consciousness-phenomena dyad and found that it points to this. We will maintain, therefore, from our foregoing

inquiry into the being of the dyad, that being-as-being is the underlying ontological foundation of all human experience.

g. being-as-being

We have come to the point in our investigation where we must analyze the nature of being-as-being just as we have done with consciousness and phenomena. It will be easier to begin our analysis of Being[12] by saying what Being is not rather than what it is. Being is not a phenomenon. Being is not consciousness. These two statements are obvious. We should also state that Being is not an object or a finite substance. We should take this to mean that Being cannot be grasped directly by consciousness (as if it were a phenomenon), but only indirectly as we are attempting in our present analysis. Its essence as existence, however, can be grasped as a truth because the intellect is capable of transcending phenomena to understand essences, as we have shown.

We know that consciousness always has an intentional object. We also know that Being, as a real existent, cannot be one of these objects. If it were, then we would have to claim that Being is nothing more than a substance in the world or an idea in the mind. Certainly, we can hold Being as an idea in our minds, but we must be clear that this idea, as an idea, is not Being as an existent, just as the idea of an elephant is not an actual elephant existing in the world. If we can, in some way, come to understand Being, it is only because we are grasping *the truth of the essence of Being*, as a phenomenon of the mind. We can take the essence of Being as an object in our mind, but this is not the same as perceiving Being as if it were a phenomenon. Being, as an existent, is incapable of being an intentional object to consciousness. The reasons for this will be further elucidated. Before we continue on that path, however, we will lastly state that Being is not extended through time or space.

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[12] To simplify our language, we will use the capitalized term "Being" to refer to "being-as-being". When a sentence begins with "Being" it should be obvious when we are referring to being-as-being.

Time and space are primordial extensions of being-in-the-world, and we know that Being is neither consciousness nor finite substance.

Being just *is*. Being is *is*. This is a tautology to be sure, but it is the only way in which we can define Being. This is because Being is the act-of-being-itself and cannot be defined by anything other than itself. We cannot distinguish between Being and the being of Being, and for this reason, it is not contingent upon any other being. The being of Being is Being. We have come to the absolute foundation of existence, and it can be nothing other than *esse*-itself. It is the ground upon which all finite existents stand. Being is pure existence through and through. The essence of Being, therefore, is Being. It is what it is, and it cannot be identified in any other way. It has no emptiness about it. It is full of its own being, through and through, because it is Being. It has no nothingness about it. It is not divisible. It is one whole. But, although it is a unity, the number "one" cannot be used to describe it, because this again would be to turn it into a perceived object. We may here call to mind certain similarities with Lao Tsu's description of *the Tao* in his *Tao te Ching*. He states,

Look, it cannot be seen – it is beyond form.
Listen, it cannot be heard – it is beyond sound.
Grasp, it cannot be held – it is intangible.
These three are indefinable;
Therefore they are joined in one.

From above it is not bright.
From below it is not dark.
An unbroken thread beyond description.
It returns to nothingness,
The form of the formless,
The image of the imageless,
It is called indefinable and beyond imagination.

Stand before it and there is no beginning.
Follow it and there is no end.

Stay with the ancient Tao,
Move with the present.

Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Tao.[13]

Even though we disagree with Lao Tsu when he mentions that it, "returns to nothingness," (since we have seen that Being and nothingness are incompatible opposites and that Being cannot *not* exist) we can take from him the notion that Being is beyond our full comprehension. Although we can grasp certain things about it, the totality of Being remains unknowable because we have finite intellects and because Being is infinite. It is not limited by a finite form. If even a finite being has an essence that we can never totally grasp, how much more so is infinite Being beyond the capacity of our minds to fully understand? Although there are certain things that we can know about Being, such as it is the fullness of truth, beauty, and goodness, the whole of infinite Being will never be able to be understood by us.

Let us dwell, for a moment, on a few truths that we *can* know about Being. We can know it is the fullness of truth because what is true must have the capacity to be *known* in some way through its existence.[14] Because Being is unlimited existence, it is infinitely true. We can know it is the fullness of beauty because what is beautiful must have the capacity of being *appreciated* through its existence. Again, because Being is unlimited in its form, it is infinitely beautiful. Lastly, we can know that it is good because what is good must have the capacity to be *desired* for its goodness through its existence. Once again, because Being is unlimited, it is infinitely good. These three aspects of Being (truth, beauty, and

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[13] Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 16.

[14] That which is true is that which is. For example, scientifically discoverable phenomena, mathematics, and logic. The question of how these immaterial truths, such as mathematics, have a real existence is beyond the scope of this book, but we mention here the fact that, if God exists, they could be said to exist in the mind of God.

goodness) are known in traditional metaphysics as *the transcendentals*.[15]

We should also recognize that "infinite" is not just a throw-away word. The phrase "infinite Being" must not be understood in a limited way. In mathematics, for example, Cantor's theorem shows that some infinities are *larger* than other infinities. But this is just the beginning. According to Burger and Starbird, "An infinity's very existence implies another infinity vaster still. The collection of all infinities has no bound. There are infinitely many different sizes of infinity - so vast a collection that no infinity can even count the number of different sizes of infinity."[16] From this, they conclude that, "Cantor's Power Set Theorem opens the door to an infinity of infinities."[17] Philosophically, this shows us that, whatever conception of infinity we may have, we can always think of a greater infinity. Because our intellects are finite, even our notions of infinity will always be limited. Therefore, the infinity of Being, since it is unlimited by any form, transcends our scales of "measuring" infinity. This is because our understanding of infinity will necessarily be limited by our finite intellects.

In this way, we can agree with Lao Tsu that Being is beyond our finite understanding. Being transcends all of our conceptions of it, even if they are infinite, since its infinity will always transcend our limited understanding of what infinite Being means. This also holds for the truth, beauty, and goodness of Being. We must never think that we have grasped the totality of infinite Being. It wholly transcends our finite understanding because it is uncontainable, self-subsistent Being. This actuality of infinite Being cannot be contained in our finite notions of infinity. These reflections, along

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[15] Things such as falsehood, ugliness, and evil (the opposites of the transcendentals) do not have existence properly speaking. Rather they are an absence. For example, evil is the privation of goodness, ugliness is a privation of beauty, and falsehood is a privation of truth.

[16] Edward B. Burger and Michael Starbird, *The Heart of Mathematics: An Invitation to Effective Thinking,* 3rd Ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 196.

[17] Burger and Starbird, *The Heart of Mathematics*, 201.

with the notion of the transcendentals, reveal to us that we are endlessly capable of drawing more richness out of Being. To this end, it is better to speak of Being as supra-intelligible rather than unintelligible.

We have previously mentioned that consciousness cannot take Being as its intentional object but only the essence of Being as a truth understood by the intellect. Since the essence of Being is pure existence, and existence is not a phenomenon of the mind or the world, it follows that Being cannot be taken as the object of consciousness. The best we can do is to catch glimpses of Being, as we have been doing, through conceptualizing Being, not as a thing, but as the foundation of the *esse* of all existents. We should not take this to mean that Being is a conglomeration of all existents, but that it is the ontological ground upon which all existents claim their stake. If an existent did not have the act of being, it would not exist. To take an obvious example, this desk is here. It is a tangible existent in the world. But I can also wonder why there is not another desk over there, next to the plant. What is the difference between the tangible desk and the desk that does not exist? The answer is obvious enough. The existing desk has *esse*, and the non-existing one does not. It is solely in my imagination. Although the *esse* of the desk cannot be an object of our consciousness, the tangibility of the desk proclaims it is there, not as a hidden side of the desk, but as the ontological bedrock upon which the desk can be perceived as existing by consciousness. Likewise, even though the self-awareness of consciousness cannot perceive its own *esse* as an object, it again recognizes Being as the ground upon which it claims its existence.

It seems possible that the Buddhist concept of *Nirvana* arises from the attempt to take Being, that is to say, pure existence, as the object of consciousness. Or better yet, if consciousness were to become awareness-of-itself-as-awareness-of-Being, we could say that it just *is*, without any notion of self-identity. This would happen because the individual mind-body unity, which provides the foundation for the intelligibility of our self-identity, would become merely a non-thetic phenomenon operating in the background of a

"detached" consciousness. It would no longer be directly utilizing the mind-body unity since it would not have a phenomenon as its intentional object. Consciousness would then be just an awareness-existing, and it is this that might be called Nirvana. This is perhaps why Buddhists speak of the purpose of meditation as creating a "still mind."[18] However, we must recognize that the attempt at Nirvana, thus understood, fails to achieve its end because Being is not a phenomenon that can be grasped as an intentional object.

On the other hand, it is *the reality of existence*, *as a particular truth*, which can be thetically grasped as an intentional object in meditation. The presence of Being, which is the foundation of consciousness and phenomena, can be grasped, not as a direct object in-itself, but in *the truth of* its there-ness. In this way, the truth of the presence of Being can become a phenomenon of the mind that is the intentional object of consciousness in meditation. In meditation, the presence of Being can arise as an unverbalized truth in thetic consciousness, out of the non-thetic background, like cream rising to the top of milk.

h. change, motion, negation, potentiality, and future projects

Now that we have become aware of the existence of Being, we are in the position to re-examine how things like change and motion can occur, from an ontological perspective, within phenomena and substances. Phenomena and substances, in comparison to Being, are ephemeral as existents. In chapter one, we identified matter as the ontological principle that allows for potentiality in corporeal beings. Corporeal things exist, to be sure, but they have aspects of both being and non-being and are capable of smoothly transitioning between the two as in actuality and potentiality. They have the act of being because they exist, but they also have an element of non-being because they are finite and cannot

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[18] According to Thich Nhat Hanh, "the practice of mindfulness is very simple. You stop, you breathe, and you still your mind. You come home to yourself so that you can enjoy the here and now in every moment." Thich Nhat Hanh, *Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 16.

stand on their own as substances. Furthermore, phenomena are dependent upon consciousness for their existence because they cannot be perceived without a perceiver.

Phenomena, considered in themselves, are like shadowy, loosely defined figures that can easily change and transition in and out of existence. For example, each time I leave my apartment, its appearance, as a phenomenon, is no longer perceivable by me until I return. It turns out that substances, as the ontological structure of phenomena, provide for the firm, solid positivity of appearances rather than appearances providing this for themselves. But the phenomena also reveal that substances are capable of change and destruction due to the ontological principle of matter. Rust slowly eats away at the metal which it infects like a disease. The flesh of a dead animal decays. The river empties itself into the lake. The sound of an echo is lost in the tunnel. Perceptions, and the substances that they reveal, are always in flux and can even be hidden as mere potentialities. For instance, the moon hides its other side from me at this moment and disguises the view of it as only a tantalizing possibility. Vast regions of the ocean remain unexplored. The neighbor's dog wakes me up with its bark, then is quiet. Phenomena appear, disappear, then reappear. They have a detached existence.

Earlier we took up the metaphor of Sartre that pools of non-being are floating throughout our perception of phenomena, but perhaps the better analogy is that phenomena are floating in a pool of non-being, ready to dissolve into nothingness at any moment. It is an interaction between consciousness and substances which draws phenomena out of non-being like a magician pulling a card out from up his sleeve, then using sleight of hand to make it disappear again. We have discovered that this is only possible because Being holds them in their potentiality.

But now we have stumbled into another problem. We are speaking of Being as a sort of creator and sustainer of phenomena, substances, and consciousness that holds their existence in its hand. Is such a manner of speaking correct, or are we just using these metaphors to help us understand how it is ontologically possible for

phenomena to flip between being and non-being? And, if we cannot think of Being as a creator, then how do explain that it seems to be the ontological cause of all substances? How also do we explain that consciousness is actualized by Being, yet suspended over the non-being of its own contingency? We are not in a position to answer these newly discovered questions at this time, so we will have to delay our response. However, we can conclude that it is Being which maintains the potentiality present in phenomena and substances when they are not being actualized. In addition, we can maintain that it is Being that sustains the existence of consciousness.

Currently, though, we have gathered enough information that it should not surprise us to find change, motion, and negation throughout the phenomena that we perceive. Phenomena, for instance, by their dependency upon consciousness for their existence, remain permanently subject to the possibility of non-being until they are overtaken by it. Additionally, substances, in their finite nature, provide the ontological basis of their negation due to the potentiality of matter. Consciousness, by its extension into time and space as an active body-mind-in-the-world, is capable of noticing the appearance, disappearance, and change of phenomena, which can then be reflected on, apprehending concepts such as motion, lack, and negation. It is for this reason that we can understand the saying of Heraclitus that, "it is not possible to step twice into the same river."[19]

We already know that Being gives rise to the *esse* of consciousness just as it gives rise to the act of being of phenomena and substances. Earlier, in chapter two, we looked into the problem of how consciousness can engage itself in future projects, such as studying for an exam. That is to ask: how can consciousness lay hold of that which is not yet to make plans to attain it? Now we are in a position to look at this problem with refreshed eyes. We have already noted that phenomena, as appearances, have an element of

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[19] Heraclitus, "Heraclitus of Ephesus," in *A Presocratics Reader*, ed. Patricia Curd, trans. Richard D. McKirahan and Patricia Curd (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011), 45.

both being and non-being about them because of their ontological dependence upon consciousness. We further noticed that consciousness is extended through the mind and body as a being-in-the-world. Since it is our being-in-the-world that establishes our ability to reflect upon that world, and because our being-in-the-world is temporal, it should be no surprise that the phenomena of the mind can grasp a future that is not yet.

Ideas, concepts, memories, thoughts, etc. all come and go through the mind as phenomena. Furthermore, the faculties of the mind can become objects of study just as the skeletal structure of our body can. They have the same precarious state of existence as the phenomena of the world because they too are ontologically dependent on consciousness for their existence. Therefore, because consciousness is extended into the phenomena of the mind as part of its being-in-the-world, and because its being-in-the-world is subject to both being and non-being, it can apprehend that which is not yet as a future project to be accomplished. Just as consciousness can manipulate the phenomena of the world via the body which it is, it can also manipulate its future projection of itself via the use of the faculties of the mind which it is. The reason why we can plan for that which has not yet happened is because of the aspect of non-being which is inherent in the temporal nature of our being-in-the-world. If you like, the mind understands itself in its own precariousness through its own possibility of non-being. This understanding arises because its being-in-the-world provides the foundation for the intelligibility of its temporal stretch through the past and the future.[20] It is this same precariousness of the mind, as part of our being-in-the-world, reflected upon its own nature, that enables it to comprehend negation and to plan for the future.

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[20] As Todes points out, we experience this primordially as *needs* in our bodily engagement with the world. As material subjects, we are necessarily projected into the future in our being-in-the-world through our need to survive. "The spatiotemporal life-field of apparent circumstances, which we generate about ourselves by moving, is the field of our body needs in which things can appear only insofar as they are relevant to our needs by meeting them or failing to meet them." Todes, *Body and World*, 58.

We may now ask another question. Since consciousness is pure awareness extended through the mind and the body, is consciousness-itself outside of space and time? Can consciousness be separated from space and time? From a purely conceptual standpoint, and considered in isolation, the essence of consciousness as a plenum of awareness does not carry within itself extensions into space and time. This is because, if it did, it would become a phenomenal object for itself, which, as was shown in chapter two, it cannot be. Rather, it is only aware of itself because it is pure subjectivity. Taken in isolation from its extension into the mind-body unity as a being-in-the-world, it has no past or future for itself. If it did, it would be like a phenomenon, such as a stream of thought, and capable of viewing itself as an object. Since it cannot do this, we must conclude that it is not extended into space and time of its own accord, but rather, it is extended into them only through its being-in-the-world. In reality, however, we have discovered that human consciousness cannot exist without an object because then it would not have anything to be *aware of*. Human consciousness must exist in-the-world, and therefore, must be extended through space and time because of the mind-body unity.

We noted earlier that consciousness of nothingness is nothingness because awareness of nothing is nothing. Again, we must reiterate that this is not because consciousness is a nothingness but because consciousness is a pure and full awareness that cannot take itself as a phenomenal object. Since consciousness requires a phenomenon as its object, however, it follows that it must be extended into the world through the mind-body unity in order to exist. In human reality, it is extended through this unity as being-in-the-world. It is as dependent on phenomena as phenomena are dependent on it. It follows that, practically speaking, human consciousness exists in the extensions of space and time as in-the-world. In actuality, it cannot be separated from these two extensions because it cannot be separated from the mind and the body. All three of these, body, mind, and consciousness, are integral to our being-in-the-world and are united by the soul, even though they are all distinct.

From the foregoing, we can again bring to light the relationship between Being and consciousness. Since consciousness is dependent upon phenomena for its existence, it cannot claim to be its own act of being. Otherwise, it could exist completely on its own, independent of every other existent. But since this is not the case, and consciousness cannot lay claim to its own being as such, it follows that its *esse* comes from Being. Being is at the heart of consciousness, just as it is at the heart of the phenomena. It holds the existence of consciousness "in its palms." This is where the concept of death enters to instill fear into the person. Consciousness knows its own instability in existence through reflection in the mind. It comprehends its dependence upon the phenomena of the mind and the body which it is. It knows that one day it will no longer be, the body and mind will cease to function, and it will lose its claim to existence. Consciousness typically apprehends this possibility through dread. This is why, according to Heidegger, "proximally and for the most part Dasein covers up its ownmost Being-towards-death, fleeing *in the face* of it."[21] In our introduction, we asked, what is the meaning of death? We are not yet ready to give a full answer to the question because we are not finished with our examination of human existence. However, we will state that, for now, death appears as the jaws of nothingness that engulf consciousness into its non-being, severing its relationship with Being.

i. finite being

What then are the depths of my own being? I exist as a human being, with body, mind, and consciousness, as we have established, but I am also dependent upon Being for my existence. I have conscious awareness of mental and external phenomena, but this awareness cannot be considered *the source* of my being. In Edith Stein's work, *Finite and Eternal Being*, a clear distinction is made between these two kinds of being, and we can use this as our

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[21] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 295.

guide.[22] My conscious awareness has the act of being, to be sure, but it cannot be its own foundation, as we have previously established. My being-as-consciousness cannot be severed from my particular consciousness without ending in my non-existence. Similarly, a particular cup cannot be severed from its being-as-cup without falling into non-existence. Because it is a finite being, subject to non-being, it exists as a particular individual substance. If one tries to sever the act of being of any finite existent from the existent-itself, the finite existent then falls away into nothingness. Being-as-Being, as their foundation, actuates their finite being by giving them their *esse*. We still have yet to seek out how this is possible, but for now, we will just mention that it must be so. Finite existents "borrow" their *esse* from Being. The act of being of an existent is not Being, but they cannot have the act of being without this ontological foundation to establish it. It is an act that they cannot give to themselves. Rather, it must be received from Being.[23] They are their being-as-something, and this something is always finite, limited, and particular.

It is self-given that a cup cannot exist without its being a cup. In the same way, consciousness cannot exist without its being a consciousness. But does this mean that we must conclude that being-as-consciousness is the same as Being in the sense that it can be its own foundation? Based on the whole of our foregoing analysis, we must answer negatively. For instance, we can

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[22] She states, "in my own being, then, I encounter another kind of being that is not mine but that is the support and ground of my own unsupported and groundless being . . . the ground and support of my being – as of all finite existents – can ultimately be only one being which is not some received being (as is all human being). It must be a *necessary being*, i.e., it must differ from everything that has a beginning in that it alone cannot not be. Because the being of this existent is not received being, there cannot be any separation between *what* it is (and what could or could not be) and its actual existence: It must be its very act of existing." Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being,* trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), 58-59.

[23] Only Being can give the act of being to another existent because only Being has *esse* as its form. Finite beings give that which belongs to them, their form, to other finite beings. For example, two animals of a species pass on their form to the next generation through propagation.

distinguish between the being-as-cup and Being as its ontological foundation. Being is not the being-as-cup, but the cup also requires Being for its existence. The being-as-cup cannot exist without Being because it cannot be that which sustains its own existence. The same can be said about consciousness. Why? Because, as was explicated earlier in the chapter, the cup exists as a substance and consciousness exists as a consciousness. These two existents, as was previously shown, are contingent, finite beings that require an ontological foundation that can only be Being.

But can we then say that Being is the depth of my being? We have shown the distinction between infinite Being and a particular finite being, such as a consciousness or a phenomenon. Now we must determine where, if anywhere, my finite being as a particular person ends and Being begins. We have determined that I am a union of my particular body, my particular mind, and my particular consciousness. These three existents are finite. They are drawn with borders that separate me from other existents. From this, it follows that I am not Being. Being is infinite Being. It is not a particular type of finite being. It does not have an essence that limits its being as being-as-consciousness or being-as-cup. We have shown that Being is simply its own existence, through and through. The *esse* of finite beings, however, is limited by the finite form of the individual being. The essence of Being is *esse*, whereas the essence of consciousness is awareness and the essence of an individual substance is its series of appearances.

Furthermore, each consciousness has a unique vantage point that is distinct from any other consciousness which may exist. Similarly, each phenomenon has a unique appearance that is distinct from any other phenomenon. On the other hand, Being is not distinct from Being. It is pure existence. All of this is to show that I am not Being, or if we prefer, Being is not the depth of my being. I, as a finite being, have a shallow depth, so to speak. It is a limited depth. The depth of my being does not reach Being, in the sense of identity. However, Being is my ontological foundation. It is the necessity upon which my contingency is based. I need Being, but I am not Being, and Being does not need me. I am this particular,

individual being, with a finite essence as a person. I have the act of being in so far as I exist, but I do not possess my *esse* as one who has control over it. In other words, I am not my own creator, I am not a *causa sui*, and I do not found myself at an ontological level. I am a finite being whose essence is differentiated from that of Being. I must receive my *esse* from Being.

This should give us a clue about whether or not we should hold that there is a universal consciousness. A universal consciousness is one singular consciousness that accounts for every vantage point of each individual consciousness. In other words, this belief holds that there is no distinction between individual consciousnesses. There is just one consciousness in existence, but it is funneled through each particular mind and body like a singular body of water that is diverted into multiple streams. But we must recall here our discussion regarding a consciousness that has nothingness as its object. As we have noted, such a consciousness cannot exist because consciousness requires phenomena, whether mental or external. The idea of a universal consciousness cannot withstand this blow. A universal consciousness requires us to separate consciousness from the mind and the body as a self-sufficient, distinct existent. It is not tied down to any particular mind and body but is instead considered ontologically self-sustained as an existent. It is always there, lurking in the background, waiting for a new "stream" to appear which it can flow into. In this way, a universal consciousness would be similar to Being in that it is its own existence. But we have shown that this is impossible since consciousness cannot be ontologically separated from the phenomena which it perceives. They form a dependence on each other. Therefore, each consciousness is individualized by its particular vantage point and tied to a particular mind and a particular body. There cannot be a universal consciousness because it would have to exist ontologically prior to any particular expression in a particular body, which is impossible. In addition, we have noted that consciousness is a self-awareness, but there is no self-awareness of a universal consciousness to be found in my consciousness. On the non-thetic level, I am only aware of an individualized self. If the

theory of universal consciousness were true, I should expect to be self-identified with this universal consciousness on the non-thetic level. In this case, I would perceive everyone else's experiences as part of the background of my own experience. Since this is not so, we must reject the idea of a universal consciousness.

On the other hand, some may desire to expound a view that there is nothing deeper or more primary than appearances or that appearances take ontological precedence over Being. Appearances then become the goal and the fulfillment of existence as a finite being. Individuals, in other words, exist to appear, and their only value as finite existents lies in their appearance since they cannot exist without appearing. A similar view is outlined in Arendt's work *The Life of the Mind*.[24] At first, this view seems to make sense since it is ontologically necessary for consciousness and phenomena to exist as a unity. Without the perceiver-perceived dyad, which hinges upon appearances, this unity could not exist. So, it seems that appearances should take the front stage since without them there cannot be conscious existence. In addition, if we look at the natural world, for example, internal organs, we notice their ugliness compared with the external organs such as skin and eyes, as Arendt points out in her work.[25] It seems that nature itself realizes that to exist is to appear and that appearances are the purpose of existence. This would explain why the beauty of an animal is what is displayed to the observer. The purely functional parts of the body, such as livers, stomachs, and kidneys, which are necessary for the life and existence of the organism, seem ontologically subordinate to the

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[24] She states, for instance, that, "The primacy of appearance is a fact of everyday life which neither the scientist nor the philosopher can ever escape, to which they must always return from their laboratories and studies, and which shows its strength by never being in the least changed or deflected by whatever they may have discovered when they withdrew from it." Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: The Groundbreaking Investigation on How We Think* (New York: Mariner Books, 1981), 24.

[25] For instance, she states that, "outside features of living things . . . are arranged according to the law of symmetry so that they appear in a definite and pleasing order. Inside organs, on the contrary, are never pleasing to the eye." Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 28-29.

external appearance of the organism. In a word, the internal organs exist so that the external appearance can exist. The function of the internal organs is to keep up the appearance of the organism. The internal organs, by themselves, are gross and repulsive, but the appearance which they allow to thrive is attractive.

This argument, however, can be flipped on its head. If the appearance is attractive to the point of having sexual value, for example, of drawing in a mate for procreation, then has not the appearance become subordinate to existence again? In other words, we can use these same facts to argue that the appearance of the organism *exists for* the procreation and continuation of the species. And, if that is so, it seems that existence reclaims its status as the reason for the appearance. From these facts alone, it is not clear which is the case. They cannot be used to support one hypothesis over another. Furthermore, when considering the argument from a naturalistic standpoint, we must admit it is true that, without the existence of the internal organs to sustain the appearance, the external appearance of the organism vanishes. In other words, appearances are dependent upon the internal organs for their existence, and without this process, they could not appear. However, the opposite is not true. The function of internal organs is not dependent upon the fullness or beauty of appearance. The external appearance of the organism is indebted to the internal organs, in their ugliness, for their very arising as appearances that can be perceived. Without the proper functioning of the internal organs, the skin and eyes decay, and the organism falls into nothingness.

Besides the naturalistic point of view, we can also criticize this argument from an ontological standpoint. We must, of course, admit that the consciousness-phenomena dyad is an awareness of appearances. While this is true in itself, it cannot be used as an argument to establish the ontological superiority of appearances over Being since it is a circular argument. It is saying appearances are ontologically superior to Being because they cannot exist without their existence. However, we have seen that this dyad cannot be its own ontological foundation. We have also noted earlier that there *is* an existent which is its own existence and is not dependent upon any

other existent for its existence. This existent is, namely, Being. Furthermore, the subjectivity of consciousness, as we noted in chapter two, is not itself an appearance, yet it is a requirement for the existence of phenomena. This is a second existent that exists without becoming a phenomenal object. Additionally, since phenomena and consciousness are dependent upon each other, as well as dependent upon Being for their existence, then we must conclude that neither of them can take ontological precedence over Being.

Being remains the only existent that is ontologically necessary, while the consciousness-phenomena dyad of perceiver-perceived is dependent upon Being. Furthermore, the consciousness-phenomena dyad is contingent because there is no necessity found in the existence of consciousness or phenomena. They seem to arise out of non-being with no reason and fall back into non-being without reason. The only necessary being can be Being since it is its own existence and claims existence as its essence. However, this does not mean that appearances should be viewed as merely superficial. We have seen that appearances reveal truths about reality. As we have noted, human existence is that of a bodily-subject-in-the-world that engages with the world in a predictable manner. Appearance is part of our existence and we indeed have a desire, and even a need, to be seen and heard. As human beings, we cannot separate the fullness of being from appearing. This is an intrinsic part of what it means to be a being-in-the-world. However, we should not make the mistake of thinking that Being is subordinated to, dependent on, or derivative of appearing.

In this chapter, we have determined that Being is the missing existent that we were looking for. Being is given in human experience and is the ontologically necessary foundation upon which that experience occurs. We have described Being to the best of our abilities as supra-intelligible and have also determined that Being has ontological primacy over both consciousness and phenomena. The being of finite beings cannot be confused with Being, although they receive their *esse* from Being. We have come a long way in our

investigation, but we have up to this point only analyzed consciousness and phenomena from a singular perspective. That is, we have not yet established the existence of other consciousnesses. Our analysis of human existence remains vastly incomplete until we discuss this issue. We must, therefore, continue to probe into human existence to determine if we can establish the existence of others.

CHAPTER FOUR – LOVE

The existence of others seems so obvious that we most often take it for granted. We encounter them in nearly every phenomenon that we experience. The hand of the other is on this computer as manufactured; it is on this stop sign which refers me to the laws of a society; it is in this music which I am listening to as created to be heard, etc. It is also ingrained into many of the projects that we undertake. It is in the project of this book that I write for another to read. It is in the project of becoming a doctor to assist others as patients. It is in the project of my trip to the alps, since I walk along other's paths and stay at their lodges. In short, I seem to be referred to the existence of others at every turn. No doubt, this is what Heidegger has shown with his analysis of the *mitsein* (being-with).[1] Furthermore, Sartre has thoroughly analyzed the concept of being-for-others and shown that in *the look* we find a phenomenological basis for the existence of others.[2] He goes on to claim that being-for-others is our only true relation with others. Sartre is critical of the notion of being-with-others as only a side product of our being-for-others which fades away quickly after it has been realized. While we will certainly accept that *the look* can establish the

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[1] He says that, "knowing oneself is grounded in Being-with, which understands primordially. It operates proximally in accordance with the kind of Being which is closest to us – Being-in-the-world as Being-with; and it does so by an acquaintance with that which Dasein, along with the Others, comes across in its environmental circumspection and concerns itself with – an acquaintance in which Dasein understands." Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 161. We will agree that, through this understanding of *mitsein*, the ontological existence of others can be established.

[2] For instance, he states, "each look makes us prove concretely – and in the indubitable certainty of the *cogito* – that we exist for all living men; that is, that there are (some) consciousnesses for whom I exist." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 374. We will agree with Sartre that *the look* provides a phenomenological basis for the existence of others. This also has ontological import since, as we will continue to see, the existence of others is a part of our being. Our existence is unfathomable without reference to others. Therefore, we will have to establish which mode of being is ontologically primary with regard to our relations with others: being-for or being-with.

existence of others and that we can exist as a being-for-others, which is in the perpetual conflict of a subject-object relationship, we will not agree that this is our primary relation with others. We will look to being-with-others as our primary relation with others.

If we are going to claim that our primary relation with others is through being-with-others as opposed to being-for-others, then we must be able to show that being-with-others can establish the existence of others. It is exactly this notion that Sartre rejected and caused him to give priority to the conflict of being-for-others, as he thought that being-with-others does not provide a phenomenological basis for their existence. In his view, it is only *after* we have discovered the other through a subject-object relationship that we can have any notion of being-with-them as part of a group. Along the way, we will differentiate ourselves from Heidegger's analysis of *mitsein* by taking up a different approach which is founded upon love and inter-relational being. It is through an analysis of love that we will seek to discover the existence of others through a being-with rather than a being-for, and it is through love that we will seek to establish being-with-others as our primary relation to others.

Because Sartre so thoroughly argued for the being-for-others as our primary relation to them, and because we are founding our attempt upon the basis of love, it is appropriate that we look to Sartre's view of love to begin our analysis. Sartre's view is that love is essentially an attempt to set myself up as a sort of idol in the heart of the other - an idol that is adored and established in permanence by the freedom of the other.[3] Or if we prefer, the other's heart can be analogized as a mirror through which I desire to see my reflection as their beloved. But this "mirror" is free, so I must continually act in such a way as to fascinate the other to set my reflection in stone and

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[3] He believes that, "in Love the Lover wants to be 'the whole world' for the beloved. This means that he puts himself on the side of the world; he is the one who assumes and symbolizes the world; he is a *this* which includes all other *thises*. He is and consents to be an *object*. But on the other hand, he wants to be the object in which the Other's freedom consents to lose itself, the object in which the Other consents to find his being and his *raison d'etre* . . ." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 479.

become their world as an object, lest someone or something else become their world instead. He claims that I do this in an attempt to establish my facticity within them.[4] Or if you like, I harness their freedom-to-choose-a-lover to infect them with the virus of myself, to set myself as the beloved-object at the heart of their existence. But this is a cynical, if not grotesque, understanding of love. Certainly, what he describes does happen, but it can hardly be called a complete analysis of love.

The drastic incompleteness of his view can be demonstrated, for example, if we consider the concept of sacrifice. If we are to adopt Sartre's view, a sacrifice made on someone else's behalf is nothing more than a down payment to become their idol and to see my reflection as that of the beloved in the heart of the other. If we accept this as true, then there can be no such thing as a selfless sacrifice since every sacrifice will ultimately refer me to myself. But consider the case of St. Maximillian Kolbe. He was a Catholic priest who voluntarily gave his life to save another man in Auschwitz. Are we going to assert that his motivation was a desire to become an idol for others? If so, are we to take this desire as a subconscious urge or a pre-meditated choice? Where do we find the basis for such an assertion? It seems that these explanations are lacking something, although we cannot yet say exactly what. At the outset, we cannot be so easily satisfied with what seems to be an inadequate understanding of love concerning situations of sacrifice, so further investigation is required. We may wonder if this view is a degradation of the human person by what it implies. But we are getting too far ahead of ourselves. We must take up a phenomenological analysis of love in human relations to see what we may find. We will ultimately seek to move beyond a purely phenomenological analysis into an ontological analysis of love's

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[4] For Sartre, this means the bad faith attempt of the for-itself to become an in-itself. He argues, "to want to be loved is to invest the Other with one's own facticity; it is to wish to compel him to re-create you perpetually as the condition of a freedom which submits itself and which is engaged; it is to wish both that freedom found fact and that fact have preeminence over freedom." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 480.

implications for being-with-others, but it remains to be seen how this will be accomplished.

At first glance, it seems that, in our normal relations with others, we treat them as objects, even when we have the best intentions. Indeed, we may even admit that Sartre is correct that this is how we most frequently relate to others. When the employee gets paid by their employer, we can view this exchange in such a way that both are interacting with each other as an object. The employee interacts with the employer as a means to obtain money, and the employer interacts with the employee as a means to obtain a service. It is a purely functional relationship by which persons are used as means to an end. For another example, a friend asks another friend to go with her to the movie theatre so as not to have to go alone. Again, we could take the position that the friend is being used as an object. A poor man asks for money from a businessman so that he can have the means for a lunch.

Even acts of love, at first glance, seem to be nothing more than a subject-object relationship. A woman gives her money to a homeless man because she sees him as an object to be pitied. His dirty clothes, his grown-out beard, his cardboard sign, and his tin can, all portray a collective object for her. She feels sympathy at the sight of him and feels compelled to assist this pitiful object-person. A husband buys roses for his wife, but the roses can be viewed as a gift for his wife-object. By this, we mean that he has certain goals in mind, her happiness, her pleasant surprise, her comfort through a difficult time, a reminder of an anniversary, etc. These goals may portray that he is treating her as an object-person whom he must keep satisfied or else risk the humiliation of a divorce. He must work to keep himself as the idol of her heart. We may say that he is treating her well, certainly, but it seems that his treatment is still that of a subject to an object. It is in this sense that we say, "she is the object of his love." He may be using the roses as a means to gain an end, namely, the satisfaction of his wife. In this act of giving, then, he is still treating her as an object that needs to be satisfied and appreciated.

So, are we to consider love just another subject-object

relationship similar to that which we have with all the instruments we use? Should we abandon the notion of love as a means to establish our being-with-others? Even if I succeed in doing something *for* the other, as opposed to for myself, am I not treating them as an object *which I act upon* to make them happy, satisfied, appreciated, etc.? But we must question if we are accurately describing the nuances of love when compared to other subject-object relationships. If I look closer, for example, at the husband who has bought roses for his wife, I cannot say that he is treating her in the same way as he treats other instruments, such as a kitchen utensil. He does not feel, for instance, any compassion for the utensil he uses to prepare his food. If it breaks, he tosses it away and buys a new one. He does not consult the utensil before he uses it because the utensil cannot have a perspective of its own. He does not go out of his way to make special signs of affection towards the utensil. When it is dirty, he simply puts it in the dishwasher so it can be used again.

All of this is a way of stating that the man treats the kitchen utensil in this "rough" manner because he knows that there is no subjectivity and no freedom in it. Such is not the case with his wife, and Sartre would admit this much. Does he not treat her in a special way precisely because he recognizes her subjectivity? At the very least, he must recognize the freedom that is given with the consciousness of the other to treat them as a consciousness that needs to be wooed. In other words, even if his goal is to establish himself as an idol for the other, he can only make this his goal by recognizing the subjectivity and freedom of the other. If we also look at the example of the woman who gives money to the beggar, the reason she feels compassion for him and gives him the money is that she recognizes a *person* there. She would not leave money in a rusty tin can next to an abandoned pile of dirty clothes. Or, if she did, it would be because she would expect a person would collect it. It is *the person who is in the clothes* that makes all the difference in her decision. She recognizes the subjectivity of the homeless man, and it stirs her empathy.

It seems then, that based on all of these considerations, we

cannot accurately describe our relationship with others as a strict subject-object relationship. There is a clear differentiation between the way I interact with objects in the world and the way that I interact with other people. There is an inherent recognition of the subjectivity of the other whenever I am interacting with them. Even an interaction with a waiter at a restaurant, who could be seen as just a robotic series of utilitarian processes to bring the food, take the check, etc., is not a strictly subject-object relationship. On the one hand, it seems that I treat the waiter as an object when I give him my order, leave him a tip, or inform the manager that his service was excellent. But, even in these scenarios, is there not a non-thetic awareness of the personhood of the waiter? I cannot help but acknowledge his subjectivity.

When I give him an order, I am, at the very least, non-thetically aware that I am giving it *to another person* and that he is simply performing the tasks of a waiter to make a living. When I leave him a tip, I am, at the very least, non-thetically aware of how he may spend the money or how much money he is earning per hour based on the number of tables he is waiting on and how his quality of life is based upon his earnings. When I inform the manager of his excellent service, I am, at the very least, non-thetically aware that he will likely be rewarded and how this will emotionally affect him. In all of this, we must not confuse using a person as a function to attain an end with treating the person as a non-subjective object. In all situations, I am, at a minimum, non-thetically aware of the fact that they remain a person who is a particular body, a particular mind, and a particular subject-consciousness. Their body and mind remain objects for me, but I also am forced to recognize the truth of their consciousness, if only non-thetically.

To be sure, I have an end in mind, for example, when I give comfort to one of my friends. I console him, for instance, to help him out of his depression. But this is not because I see him as a sort of consciousness-object-to-be-consoled. In fact, there is a contradiction of terms here. If I aim at the affirmation of his personhood as my end, I recognize him as a free subject and not as an object. We recognize, as human beings, the subjectivity of the

consciousness of the other when we give and receive love. It is this subjectivity that I apprehend when I console my friend. My goal is not to force him or manipulate him with my consolations into feeling joy rather than depression, as though his subjective state of being were mere clay in the hands of a potter. Furthermore, my goal is not to become an idol in his heart who has brought him liberation from his depression. Rather, my goal is simply *to be with him* in his sorrow. He is an end in himself.

I am content to simply be with him as he is, and he is content to have me there. I suffer with him. I am there for him, and in his sorrow, he recognizes that *he does not have to suffer alone*. I listen to him. I subjectively share in his subjective burden. If I speak words of consolation, it is to reaffirm him *in his being* as a person. I exist his sorrow with him. I take a small share in his subjective pain. I am with him as a subject who can relate and empathize with his struggles. He recognizes my subjectivity as a relief from his loneliness, and I recognize his subjectivity in my compassion for him. We have found each other's subjectivities, not through conflict, but through an act of love as the sharing of a burden. It is through acts of love that we may discover the subjective being of the other. We don't *have* to relate to others in a subject-object relation. But our analysis remains drastically incomplete, and we must dig deeper and question further. We will take our analysis of love in three divisions.

Division One - The First Quality of Love - "I am here"

We may have intuited, in the previous examples, something like a phantom coming slowly into flesh. We will name this intuitive something the "qualities" of love, and we have caught a glimpse of the first two qualities, which we will express by the statements "I am here" and "I am here with you." We will also see that the third quality will be expressed by "I am here for you." In this chapter, we will build up our understanding of love piece by piece investigating it and leading into it slowly. We will end with the culmination of our understanding of what love is based upon these three statements of the qualities of love. We will necessarily have to take these

statements one at a time, beginning with the first. The statement, "I am here," displays the truth of the existence of other consciousnesses which is necessary for love.

We must also note here that we are not concerned with a scientific approach to love that would try to explain it in terms of brain chemistry, for example. Such an approach shows the inadequacy of materialism for explaining human experience because it cannot do justice to the lived reality of love, which is our focus here. If we were to view the human person from a strictly scientific point of view, we would never understand anything deeper than the appearance of the person as a body-object and mind-object. This would be like claiming to understand the ocean because we understand the chemical makeup of the water and the actions of the tides and currents, while simultaneously ignoring the biodiversity that lives in the ocean. The ocean is more than a body of water, it is an entire ecosystem. Similarly, the human person is more than an objective ensemble of psychosomatic functions describable in materialistic terms; they are a subject-consciousness in their being-as-person, which surpasses any phenomenal description of them, as we noted in chapter two. In this chapter, we are seeking to explain the reality of love from an existential point of view, within the lived experience of the person. We will see that love is going to reach the very heart of the person, in their very being, and thereby surpass any scientific-materialistic analysis which happens solely on the level of the phenomena.

Returning now to our original investigation into the primordiality of being-with-others, it must be noted that I cannot truly love someone who is not a subject. We will come to see that, in and through love, we can come to know of the existence of others and that we do not necessarily have to come to this conclusion through conflict with the other in a subject-object duality as Sartre believed. Furthermore, even if we concede that we come to know the existence of others through conflict, it is our being-with-others that is ontologically primary with concern to the existence of others and not our being-for-others. This is what we wish to establish in the first quality of love - *the ontological primacy of our being-with-*

others. This will become evident if we take the example of a mother and child. From the very moment of our conception, we are made of a bond with another. Our flesh is, at the spark of our existence, absorbed inside the flesh of another. We do not come into existence as a stand-alone body that appears out of thin air. We come into our existence surrounded by and united with another as a flesh-to-flesh union.

a. conception, birth, and being-with-others

Even after a child is born, and the umbilical cord which united him to his mother is severed, we do not see a newly independent person. The child is still fully dependent upon his mother for his existence. According to Stern, this ontological dependence that begins at conception is "a true *fusion* of being"[5] that has been demonstrated by psychoanalysis and continues after birth. He states,

> The umbilical cord is cut and the child is physically severed from the mother, but psychologically the mother still *belongs* to the child. The baby has not found his own center of gravity as it were. Psychoanalysis has shown that the sum of the baby's psychic experiences is identical with the image of his body, and this world of the body extends without clearly defined border into the mother. We can also reverse the statement and say that the child is an extension of the mother, without clearly perceptible border.[6]

He requires his mother's milk, her tender embrace for comfort and sleeping, her care and concern for his cleanliness, etc. His existence arises within another and is nurtured alongside another. Therefore, ontologically speaking, our existence arises in the midst of another,

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[5] Stern, *The Flight from Woman*, 18.

[6] Stern, *The Flight from Woman*, 18.

not as a conflict, but as a flesh-to-flesh union that is with and not against the other. The child is not merely an object for the mother, who requires attention to be healthy. Instead, the child is immediately apprehended by the mother as *a subject-person* with needs. Indeed, the subject-personhood of the child and the mother are encountered, not only on the level of being, but also on the psychological level as well.

Here we begin to see part of our trouble in describing the inter-relational aspect of persons. It is true that, on the level of the phenomena, we are always objects for each other because we each have a body and a mind that is inhabited by an individual consciousness, and this is why we have difficulty in describing human relationships in a way that is not subject-object oriented. We are forced to describe things on the level of the phenomena. Therefore, we must take extra care when describing these relationships for our purposes, since it is only through careful analysis that we can come to the truth about them. When we describe them properly, we see that the existence of others is given through subject-subject relationships and not subject-object relationships, and we will take love as our primary means of establishing the true nature of a subject-subject relationship. It is all based upon the truth that a human person is not just a mind and a body, but also a subject-consciousness. Therefore, an accurate description of human relationships requires this piece of evidence, which is grasped, at a very minimum, in a non-thetic way by each consciousness in its interactions with others.

But let us return to the example at hand. We have said that the child's existence is entirely dependent on the existence of others, and under most circumstances, it is the biological mother who fills this role. We are not here on the level of knowledge as concerns the child, since the child has not yet developed an intellect. In other words, the child cannot formulate these thoughts. We are on the level of being. We are not talking about a mere contrivance in the psyche of the child that then grows into a psychological coloring of his existence as "with-others". We are talking about an ontological foundation that is built into his human existence as an ontological

necessity. Jay Stringer states that, "we are born so dependent on relationships that our heartbeats and body temperatures are regulated in reference to our caregivers."[7] For the child, his mother is his first experience of this being-with-others as well as his first experience of love, and we can note a connection beginning to develop between the two. We do not mean this in a mere psychological sense. This again would be to inappropriately reduce the ontology of conception and nurturing into just another psychological factor in understanding our world. But, as we have noted, we cannot be solely on the ground of psychology, since we are discussing a way of being and not merely a way of thinking or feeling.[8] We are here at the heart of the human being as a being, the origin of an individual's existence, and it is here that we find a love that is not a means-to-end relationship. It is no coincidence that the love of our mother is the first foundation of our existence. Nevertheless, concerning emotions, Dr. Conrad Baars, states, "a very young baby is able to literally *feel* the difference between being loved unselfishly, for his own goodness, and being loved possessively, for the sake of gratifying his mother's need."[9] We will see that it is this same unselfish love that establishes the origin of our being-with-others.

Now, someone may still object that this mother-child relationship exists only on the level of the body and that the consciousnesses remain separated from each other by an unbridgeable distance. The child, they may say, just perceives their

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[7] Jay Stringer, *Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveals Our Way to Healing* (n.c. NavPress, 2018), 21.

[8] According to Dr. Van der Kolk, "As we enter this world we scream to announce our presence. Someone immediately engages us, bathes us, swaddles us, and fills our stomachs, and, best of all, our mother may put us on her belly or breast for delicious skin-to-skin contact. We are profoundly social creatures; our lives consist of finding our place within the community of human beings." Van der Kolk, M.D., *The Body Keeps the Score*, 112. Indeed, we will continue to see a deepening of this ontological connection between our being and our interpersonal relationships.

[9] Conrad W Baars, M.D., *Born Only Once: The Miracle of Affirmation* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, Quincy University, 2001), 24.

mother as body parts, hands, breasts, eyes, etc. to be utilized for survival and not as a person, and the mother perceives the child merely as a functioning organism to keep alive until the intellect develops and he can take care of himself. In fact, Sartre would perhaps add that there is a tension here between mother and child to see who will become the subject in the relationship and who will become the object. He may see this mother-child dynamic as a struggle to become the idol for the other.

But we cannot accept such an interpretation. In the first place, although there may be tension in the relationship at times, we cannot view this tension as the primary mode of the relationship. At least, not in a healthy, normal one. We see in conception and birth a being-with that is more fundamental than a being-for. Their bodily union in pregnancy is an ontological union. We will continue to examine Sartre's position in *section c* and articulate more clearly why his position is fundamentally flawed. For now, we are just noting that his viewpoint has difficulty in accounting for conception, birth, and nurturing in a mother-child relationship.

In addition the mother of the child gives birth to *a person* and not just a living, functioning organism, and her awareness of this is demonstrated in her emotions of loving concern. Although, at times, the child may be fed or given attention with the end in mind that he may stop crying, on the non-thetic level at least, the mother is always aware of the personhood of the child, that is to say, the subject-consciousness of the child that inhabits the developing mind and body that she cares for. She knows, for instance, that this child has the potency of the faculties of the intellect that, under normal circumstances, will continue to grow in capability. Furthermore, even if the child has a mental disability, their personhood is not lost since they still have the potency for the use of intellectual faculties, even if this potency is not actualized. As we saw in chapter two, what makes us a person is that we have a form uniting a subject-consciousness to an individual rational mind and an individual physical body. We are also beginning to see that we will have to add inter-relational being to our notion of personhood. But that remains to be fully demonstrated. Even if our mental capacities are inhibited,

or not fully developed, we still maintain our personhood through our form and our being-with-others.

The example of the child and mother, then, is similar to the scenario that we looked at previously with the waiter. We never lose sight of our non-thetic awareness of the truth of others-as-persons, even if, at a particular moment, they remain merely a function or an object for our thetic awareness. From the point of view of the child, can we say that the child has this same awareness? We must remember, again, that we are not talking about a particular thought, idea, or other phenomena of the mind. We are talking about a state of being of the child. The child exists its being-with-others. We may go so far as to say that, since he has not developed the mental capacity to project himself into his future or reflect upon himself, he is little more than a conscious being-in-the-world-with-others. This is why we speak of the innocence of children. Again, this conscious being-with-others, which the child is, is not on the plane of self-reflection, but on the plane of existence itself. His existence is his being-with-others, and under normal circumstances, his existence grows out of the love of his mother as a being-with-her through conception and infant nurturing. This is why the child eventually learns the boundaries between himself and his mother during his infancy. Being-with is part of his being and not a psychologically manufactured trait of his existence.

We see that being-with-others necessarily establishes the existence of others, as Heidegger noted in his formulation of the *mitsein*. These two arguments, therefore, are wrapped up together. We cannot establish the primacy of being-with-others without, at the same time, establishing the ontological necessity of others as part of our being. What we find, therefore, in our ontological analysis of conception, birth, and nurturing is both that our being-with-others is our ontologically primary relationship with them *and* that the existence of others is necessary for our existence. We cannot come into existence without being tied to another, and this tie is a being-with-another. Our being necessitates the being of others, even if

they are no longer with us.[10]

b. being-with-others and psychology

Someone may protest against our current line of thought as follows: what if the mother neglects or abandons the child? Suppose that the child is given only his bodily needs and not love. Suppose the mother detests her child because he was an unwanted accident or the result of a rape. Is not the survival of this child a counter-example to the idea that love establishes our ontological foundation of being-with-others? Does this not show that it is just a psychological contrivance? First, we must be clear that, at this point, we are not setting out to establish that love is the ontological foundation of our being-with-others. We are only, at this time, establishing the ontological primacy of our being-with-others over our being-for-others. Second, it often happens in these instances that someone takes over the role of a loving natural mother, for example, through adoption. We are not claiming that the love of the caretaker is perfect, but only that it is present and necessary for the existence of the child. Third, this argument does not account for the period of pregnancy with the biological mother. When the child is in the womb, he is at his most vulnerable point. His conception is, in fact, his entry into existence, and he necessarily requires being-with his mother, in a flesh-to-flesh union, for his survival.

Now, it is true that the mother may detest the child in her womb, for various reasons, and abortion is the ultimate rejection of the child. But note that this total rejection by the mother is the death of the child. In other words, the only means for the mother to truly and finally reject the child in her womb is to destroy his existence through abortion. Until this takes place, there remains, at minimum, a non-thetic acceptance of the existence of the child as a person. Certainly, we would not call this minimum of acceptance a stellar

[10] For example, even in a post-apocalyptic world in which I would find myself as potentially the only remaining survivor on earth, my existence would still be impossible if, at some point in my past, there were not others on earth with me.

example of love, but it does show that the child's existence is dependent upon his mother's acceptance of his being-with-her in the womb. We will have to reserve the question of a possible connection between love and being until we have investigated further. But for now, we will note that the child's existence remains bound up in his being-with-others and that there is an acceptance from others, in particular the mother, that is necessary for his survival. Again, the only point we wish to establish at present is that being-with-others is our ontologically primary relation to them and that this relation necessarily demands the existence of others. The evidence for this is that the mother holds the being of her child in her hands through her ultimate acceptance or rejection. We remain at the level of ontology, the level of existence, and not the level of psychology, or whether or not we may feel connected to others.

On the other hand, in a situation where the child is delivered, but the mother still detests the child, we see the contradiction. For example, an abusive mother may feed her child so he can live, but she may also blame him for her situation (such as a ruined career or relationship) and hurt him physically or psychologically. On the level of being, his ontological foundation has been established by his mother, but can we truly say that this child has been given the fullness of his humanity? Is it not true to say that his very existence as a human being has been deprived of a part of its being? To be precise, the part of his being of which the child is deprived is his being-with-others. We may say that his ontological foundation is established but not solidified. He exists, but stands on ontologically shaky ground, like a house built on sand. In other words, his being-with-others is indeed present. It is a given in human experience and cannot be ontologically removed from that experience. Others exist as a fact of his existence. However, we cannot say that his being-with-others is fully lived. He is treated by his mother as a detestable object and not as a person with dignity. On the thetic level, he remains in a subject-object relationship with his mother. It is only on the non-thetic level that the truth of his personhood is, and must be, recognized by her.

It is important to note that, so long as the abuse is sustained,

and he does not find the affirmation of others through love, suicide will be a constant temptation. Again, we see that the lack of love, which corrodes the bonds of our being-with-others, leads to the rejection of the act-of-being itself.[11] Suicide is an attempt to ontologically reject existence - not just my existence, but all of existence, since in destroying myself, I also destroy, from my point of view, my relationship with my mother and my relationship with the entire world. In my subjective world, nothing can survive my suicide. We may here call to mind the work *Born Only Once* by Dr. Baars. True, this is primarily a psychological work, but it is based upon the ontological acceptance of the human person through the affirmation given by others and the effects of ontological rejection. Dr. Baars states that the best word to use to describe relationships of non-affirmation and ontological rejection is *denial*. He says,

> Denial, more than any other factor, leads to the destruction of what makes each man unique – his human soul or psyche. Thus, denial is the cause of a person's psychic death. *In denial we push the other away from us; we enlarge the distance between him and ourselves.* We be-*little* him by subtracting his faults and shortcomings from what is good in him; *we alien-ate him from us and push him back into the prison of loneliness* by rejecting him for being different; we cause or contribute to his *infirm*-ity by repeatedly focusing on his weaknesses and inadequacies; we *mort*-ify him by humiliating him for his failures.[12]

Nothing about this should surprise us or make us think that we are only dealing with a psychological contrivance since we would expect phenomena of the mind to be affected by our being-with-others. Since love initially seems to be at the root of our being-as-

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[11] We note here that it also may be the case that someone is loved, but for some reason (which could have various causes, such as a deep sense of shame), they are not able to accept it. This also would erode their being-with-others.

[12] Baars, M.D., *Born Only Once,* 35. (emphasis added)

person in the form of our being-with-others, it is no shock that the lack of love would create psychological disturbances in the phenomena of the mind just as starvation creates bodily disturbances in the phenomena of the world.

Now, a cynical person may take an opportunity here to criticize this last statement as follows: if starvation creates bodily disturbances in the phenomena of the world, and threatens our non-existence through death, should we conclude from this that we have an ontological relation to food since food is necessary for survival? The short answer is: yes, we do have an ontological relation to food just as we have an ontological relation with all phenomena through the being-in-the-world of our body. My body, and the world I am a part of, are necessary for my existence as a human person. But this relationship is on the level of the phenomena and, specifically, a relation of consciousness-as-body to the phenomena of the world. Therefore, it is a subject-object relationship and not a subject-subject relationship that we are dealing with. In short, our ontological relationship with food is different from our ontological relationship with others through love. However, in both cases, the being of the person is in danger, and the shaking of his existence ripples through the phenomena because we are our bodies and we are our minds. What may be shocking to us is that we seem to have discovered love at the ontological heart of the person. However, by our analogy, we only meant to draw attention to the fact that psychological disturbances as a result of lack of love do not negate the fact that love may be the primary relation of our being-with-others. We are dealing with a situation that goes deeper than psychological analysis. But we will have to investigate further.

c. the primacy of being-with-others

What we had first thought was a counterexample to our argument has turned out to be a clue in moving forward. A child who is deprived of love, but not existence, is hampered in his being by the deprivation of his ontological foundation as being-with-others. Instead of finding the solidification of his existence through

the love of his mother, he has found the conflict of being an object for her. We may again call to mind Sartre's notion of being-for-others and *the look*. But we must also see that Sartre was wrong to think that conflict and being-for-others is our primary relation to others. Rather, being-with-others is the primary relation that we have with others, and this relation is manifested through love. As we have shown, even if Sartre's notion of being-for-others is the main way in which we interact with others, we are still aware of their subject-person as a truth on a non-thetic level. For our being-for-others to arise, we must first acknowledge that there is the intersubjectivity of our being-with-others. By intersubjectivity, we shall mean a sharing of the phenomena with others that falls in-between pure subjectivity and pure objectivity.[13] In other words, intersubjectivity is the shared situation of being-in-the-world with others. I must first recognize that the other is a subject like me before I can recognize myself as a possible object for him.

This is not to say that we temporally notice one before the other. It remains true that being-with-others and being-for-others are usually realized in the mind at the same time. However, we are speaking here of ontological priority. For me to recognize that I may become an object for another, and therefore that I am in conflict with them, it must be first true that I share my being-in-the-world with them through intersubjectivity. Being-with-others comes first, ontologically speaking. I cannot recognize an ontological conflict with others if I am not first with-them-in-the-world. To have the possibility of being objectified beneath the look of the other, there must be another who is like me. The setting up of a *you-against-me* conflict requires the intersubjective situation of an *us* as being-as-persons-in-the-world. I cannot meet another in conflict unless there is another to meet ontologically prior to the conflict. And if there is another prior to a conflict, then the *we* is ontologically prior to the

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[13] Husserl took intersubjectivity to mean something along these lines. He states, "the *intersubjective identical thing* . . . is related to an indefinite plurality of subjects that stand in relation of 'mutual understanding'. The intersubjective world is the correlate of the intersubjective experience, mediated, that is, through '*empathy*'." Husserl, *Ideas*, 420.

you-against-me.

For example, if I am playing hide-and-go-seek, and I am hiding from the look of the other, it is only because we are already in the shared situation of playing this game. Likewise, to use an example from Sartre, a soldier who is beneath the look of the other as an enemy position, even if he cannot see them, must first recognize the existence of others in the situation of being-with-others-in-war.[14] In other words, there is always a context, a background, an intersubjective situation shared as a *we* for every arising of conflict with the other. The *you-against-me* only arises as a foreground upon the already established background of *we*. If I am reading a book in the library, and I look up to see another person staring at me as an object, this can only be because we were in the library, together, first, as a shared situation. Certainly, I am always aware of the possibility of being an object for others, but this is only because I already acknowledge the existence of others non-thetically as a background to my human existence. I constantly live in a background awareness of the *sharedness* of the phenomena of the world through the intersubjectivity of my being-with-others and this background is primordially formed through my conception and infancy.

This fact is the ontological origin of language.[15] Language was developed, on an ontological level, due to the recognition of the subjectivity of the other and our shared experiences as intersubjective. It is these shared experiences that are inherent in

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[14] He states, "it is only *probable* that the other is looking at me. That farm at the top of the hill *seems* to be looking at the commandos, and it is certain that the house is occupied by the enemy. But it is not certain that the enemy soldiers are at present watching through the windows." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 368. Even Sartre's examples show that there must be a background situation of being-with-others for the possibility of being-for-others to arise.

[15] Concerning this topic, Noë writes, "I am not myself, individually, responsible for making my words meaningful. They have their meaning thanks to the existence of a social practice in which I am allowed to participate . . . there is no requirement that each individual carry the burden of securing meaningful reference. We rely on others." Noë, *Out of Our Heads*, 90. It is our intersubjective sharedness of a world that gives rise to the use of language.

human existence. The human person cannot truly be removed from their existence with others as it makes up a part of their being. Language, through descriptions, reminiscences, and shared ideas with others, is another example of how the subjectivity of others is ingrained in our existence. The child learns to talk because she already belongs, on an ontological level, with others. She exists her being-with-others, and through her existence as such, she learns to communicate with them.

The sharedness of intersubjectivity can be also brought to light through love in a heartfelt goodbye, for example, or the fact that, when we miss an old friend, it is like a piece of us was taken away. When we have to say goodbye to someone whom we have grown close to, and we know that we will not see them again for a very long time, we keenly understand the nature of being-with-others. It is sometimes when we lose someone we love that we are most aware of our subject-subject relationship with them and what it meant to our existence. This wrenching away of a friend at the crossroads of life brings out our love for them on a tangible level, and at the same time, it brings out our subject-subject relationship with them. We realize that we are no longer with-them. Our being has changed.

This must be contrasted with missing a meaningful object, such as the locket of my grandmother. If I miss the locket, if losing it causes me pain, it is different from saying goodbye to a friend. The locket remains an object lost in the sea of things. If I happen to rediscover it, I reclaim it from this sea of objects as an object. However, my friend remains a subject in the situation of the world. I wonder where he is or how he is doing. If I meet him again, it may only be for a brief time, and we catch up on things we have experienced. In other words, the subject-subject relationship is not erased and is reclaimed by our reunion. We will renew our investigation into this topic later in the chapter when we look more specifically at the phenomenon of *grief*.

We may, at this point, wonder how we encounter the other as a subject-person if their subjectivity cannot be the object of consciousness. In other words, how is a subject-subject relationship

possible if this relationship cannot be established by the subject-object relationship of ourselves with the world? The answer is that we encounter the subjectivity of others in the foundation of our being and not in our engagement with the world of intentional objects. While *the truth* of their subjectivity can be an object for consciousness as a phenomenon of the mind, *the encounter* with the other as a subject takes place on the level of being that surpasses the phenomena. While we encounter intentional objects through our consciousness as a being-in-the-world, we encounter subject-persons through our being-with-others. We have an inter-relational aspect at the foundation of our being that is built into our being-as-person. Therefore, it is in the depths of our being-as-person, and not in the world of phenomena, that we encounter the being-as-person of others. Or if you prefer, it is at the ontological foundation of our subject-personhood that we encounter other subject-persons. This ontological foundation we have called being-with-others.

Furthermore, the awareness of the truth of my being-with-others, which always remains in the non-thetic background of my existence as a person, is established by this ontological foundation through conception and infancy, as we have shown, when I am dependent upon my being-with-others for my existence and survival. We have already discussed the nature of this relation in detail, noting that the fulfillment of my being-with-others *may* be found in love, which is the ontological acceptance of myself by another in my being-as-person. Therefore, we must acknowledge that, even if we analyze this situation from a common-sense temporal standpoint, our being-with-others comes before our being-for-others since we come into existence through conception and then as a small baby dependent upon its mother. Our first quality of love, "I am here", demonstrates the ontological priority of our being-with-others, as well as the existence of others, which makes up part of our own existence as persons.

Division Two - The Second Quality of Love - "I am here with you"

From this point, we are ready to move on to our analysis of

the second quality of love, namely, "I am here with you". While our first quality concerned the existence of the other, it is here, in the second quality of love, that we will note that *love is essential to our being-with-others*. It is essential because, without being-with-others in love, human existence remains ontologically incomplete, as we have begun to see. Sartre's conflict of being-for-others cannot solidify the ontological foundation of a human being since he always remains at a distance from others. Being-with-others is a completion of his ontological status, while the conflict of being-for-others remains a decay upon his ontological foundation. We are beginning to see that, if I remain just an object for others and they remain just an object for me, through conflict, then I remain ultimately alienated from them. This Sartre has also seen.[16] It is only through being-with-others-in-love that I realize the true existence of others not in a subject-object relationship of conflict but in a subject-subject relationship of love. Again, our being-with-others remains our fundamental relation with them because I must first apprehend the other as sharing in my situation, through intersubjectivity, as another being-as-person, prior to setting up a subject-object conflict with them. So, if being-with-others is a foundational part of my existence, and if this being-with-others is established through love, which is a subject-subject relationship, then love becomes essential to my being-with-others. It is our task now to investigate this bond that we see forming between love and being-with-others.

When we say that there is a bond between love and being-with-others what does this mean? To answer this question, we first must clarify the notion of our being-with-others. We have stated that this is a subject-subject relationship. What does this mean? It means that, in my being-with-others, I recognize the subjectivity of the other. It is, of course, true that, on the level of the phenomena,

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[16] He states that, "by the fact of the Other's existence, I exist in a situation which *has an outside* and which due to this very fact has a dimension of alienation which I can in no way remove from the situation any more than I can act directly upon it. This limit to my freedom is, as we see, posited by the Other's pure and simple existence – that is, by the *fact* that my transcendence exists for a transcendence." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 672-673.

they remain an object to me. For example, their body remains an object-for-me-in-the-world just like a fountain or a statue. Furthermore, their mind, with their personality, also remains a psychic object-for-me-in-the-world. This is what psychologists aim at in their studies, the other as a psychic object, in a similar way to a physician that treats the body of the person as an object. So, it is true that, on the level of the phenomena, the other is always an object for me.

However, this is not the complete picture. What I am aware of is not an inter-situational existence with other bodies, which may be empty shells like zombies, but an *intersubjectivity* with other persons. We have noted, of course, that a person is a body, a mind, and a consciousness united in an individual by a form. In our being-with-others we encounter them as free consciousnesses inhabiting particular bodies and particular minds. This is where the notion of a subject-subject relationship comes in. When we speak of a subject-subject relationship in our being-with-others, we are stating that the whole person is present on both sides of the relationship. In other words, the subject-object relationship which we have with normal objects in the world is surpassed by the acknowledging of the subjectivity of the other, and this acknowledgment is established in the heart of our being as an inter-relational being-with-others. We will use several examples to show how this subjectivity is ontologically acknowledged in our being.

d. music and being-with-others

For our first example, we shall take music in demonstrating the meaning of a subject-subject relationship. In particular, there are music styles, such as jazz or jam rock, which emphasize this relationship through improvisation. In music, in general, and especially in music that utilizes improv, one must be listening and playing at the same time. It is a shared creativity that passes from subject to subject like speaking. I am listening to the beat of the drums, the melody of the guitar, and the line of the bass, and at the same time, I am fitting in runs and rhythms on the piano that are

blending harmoniously with the music of the others. I must listen to the free creativity that emanates from their subjectivity and passes through their instruments by the use of their active body, while at the same time contributing with my creativity through my instrument so as not to ruin the overall effect of the music.

First, one takes the forefront while the others remain in the background; then, another steps into the limelight, and the other backs away. This is truly an example of being-with-others in a subject-subject relationship. Each participant's music is shared, absorbed, distributed, and ultimately enhanced by the participation of the others in a revolving door of creativity. Music also reaches the subjectivity of the audience. Dancing, in particular, is a way in which their subjectivity joins together with the musicians to participate in this shared creativity with them. What mesmerizes us about watching a dancer is that the music is welcomed in by her subjective consciousness and outwardly expressed through a series of free and graceful body movements. It is the movements of her body, as part of her person, which demonstrates her subjective participation in the music as being-with-the-musicians. In this way, the truth of her subjectivity is perceived in her body.

Music and dance, therefore, demonstrate being-with-others in a subject-subject relationship. This is what Josef Pieper identified when he states,

> Since music articulates the immediacy of man's basic existential dynamism in an *immediate* way, the listener as well is addressed and challenged on that profound level where man's self-realization takes place. In this existential depth of the listener, far below the level of expressible judgments, there echoes - in identical immediacy - the same vibration articulated in the audible music.[17]

Music reaches our ontological foundation of being-with-others

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[17] Josef Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 47.

because we recognize the presence of other subject-persons through the creativity produced in the phenomena. The sounds that reach my ears and move my body to dance reveal themselves as emanating from another like me and inviting me to share in their creativity. They do not isolate me from the other as an object but bring me closer to him through this sharing in the creativity of his music that originated at the center of his being. The phenomenon of music demonstrates to us that we can truly be with another without any conflict of *the look*.

e. humor and being-with-others

For our second illustration of what we mean by a subject-subject relationship as opposed to a subject-object relationship, we will utilize the examples of laughing at someone versus laughing with someone. When we speak of laughing at someone, we are treating them as an object. For example, on his wedding day, the groom may trip while he is walking down the aisle, dragging the bride with him in a moment of great embarrassment. Let us suppose that the bride and groom are ashamed, serious, and do not find humor in the situation. They then become objects which are laughed at by the assembled congregation. They feel the eyes of others like daggers upon their self-esteem. They are humiliated and perhaps angered by the reaction of others. We are here at the level of *the look* and conflict.

However, if we suppose instead that the bride and groom *do* find humor in the situation, and that they topple over laughing and willingly share in the joke, then the situation has changed from a subject-object to a subject-subject relationship with all involved. The incident becomes a shared moment between the bride, the groom, and the congregation in which they all find they are of "one mind". They all share in the laughter. It becomes a moment that draws everyone together, an experience that unites them as one in the joke. They may tease the bride and groom. It may become a memory that can be called up years later. Remember when you both fell walking down the aisle? *We were there with you*. We

participated *with you* in that moment. Humor can bring people together in a shared subjectivity through the joke, especially when we find humor in an experience that was shared among us.

Of course, the bride and groom are persons, and it is always preferable that their personhood and dignity are preserved in either situation. We only are noting the difference between the two interpretations to draw out the difference in phenomena of being-with versus being-for. Additionally, we should note that, in both instances, there is always the background intersubjectivity of being-with-others. This is not eliminated by the subject-object relationship where the bride and groom are laughed at and do not share in the joke. Yet, when they freely join in the joke with others, this intersubjectivity becomes truly shared at the level of their being and the subject-object relation is replaced with a subject-subject relation where the subjectivity of everyone involved is united in their experience of the event. The difference is that, in the later interpretation of the event, the bride and groom have freely gathered themselves into that interpretation by seeing the humor in it. They have chosen to unite their perspective of the event with the perspective of the congregation, thereby joining their subjectivity with the subjectivity of the congregation. This, in turn, transforms the potential subject-object relationship into the fullness of a subject-subject relationship whereby the event is willingly shared in the subjectivities of the bride and the groom.

Humor, then, can be a way in which we experience a true subject-subject relation with another. We are both together, united by an experience in which there is not found any conflict. The humor becomes a way in which we experience one another as a person whom I can simply be with, rather than one that necessarily leads to opposition between us. Our respective freedoms are no longer locked in a battle to transcend the other, but instead find a sort of fulfillment in which I can encounter the other as other, without losing my own sense of personhood. In this circumstance, humor becomes a bridge which unites our subjectivities in a common experience. Our relationship is mutually affirming and the personhood of both parties is preserved.

f. sexual intimacy and being-with-others

In furthering our investigation, especially in illuminating the difference between subject-object and subject-subject relations between persons, it will be of assistance for us to utilize the example of sexual intercourse in comparison with the use of pornography. For our purposes, we must clarify that we are taking the example of intercourse as a male-female union that is consensual, within the bond of marriage, and open to the possibility of the creation of life. We shall call an act that meets these criteria *sexual intimacy*. We take these as our criteria because this is the fullest and freest way in which a sexual union can occur, as we shall find later on in our analysis.

When two lovers meet in sexual intimacy, what does this tell us about their being-with-each-other from an ontological standpoint? First, it is an ontological proclamation that "I am here". This we saw as our first quality of love. The lovers are proclaiming their existence to each other through their bodies. The way their bodies are wrapped together, the union of the male and female genital organs, the whispers of loving words in the ear of the other, the kisses and caresses on the body of the other, all of these are establishing their existence to the other – not merely on the level of phenomena, but as we have seen, on the level of being. I am here. Second, it is an ontological proclamation that "I am here with you". What we see here is a deepening of the existence of the other like a groove in the ground being formed by the consistent flow of water along the same route. Not only am I here, but *you are not alone*. I am with you. I am not alienated from you. I recognize your subjectivity and we together form a subject-subject relationship. You are not a mere object for me, like a glass of wine to be drunk. Here again, we are at the crux of the second quality of love, and we must continue down this path.

When a husband takes to his wife in sexual intimacy, and vice versa, when they gaze into each other's eyes, they are staring into the subjectivity of the other through the eyes. When their

bodies are united, they are feeling the subjectivity of the other through the body. When they whisper words of love, their words are resounding in the subjectivity of the other, like an echo in a well. When they smell the scent on the neck of the other, they are wafting in the subjectivity of the other. When they taste the skin of the other in their kisses, they are savoring the subjectivity of the other. During sexual intimacy, there is the encounter of the other as a subject. This is because they have given their subjectivity to each other, *in freedom*, through their bodies. Now, Sartre claims that this attempt fails and that they remain isolated from each other.[18] But this is because he is examining these actions through the lens of being-for-others as an attempt to ensnare the other's subjective freedom to establish oneself as the other's idol or to possess their freedom as an object. But we must disagree. While Sartre's view is necessarily characterized by division, our view brings out the experience of communion.

What we see *in sexual intimacy* is a subject-subject encounter of being-with-others where the dignity of the other is protected through love. In love, the subjectivity of the other is encountered, not as a phenomenal object, but as a relational person. To be sure, the phenomena do not leave the plane of the phenomena. They remain appearances. However, because these phenomena are the body and mind of the person given to the other in the subjective freedom of consciousness, when the lover encounters the body of the other, he is also encountering her subjectivity as a person on the plane of being-with. This is possible precisely because we are our

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[18] He argues, "desire stands at the origin of its own failure inasmuch as it is a desire of *taking* and of *appropriating*. . . Therefore desire is naturally continued not by *caresses* but by acts of taking and of penetration. The caress has for its goal only to impregnate the Other's body with consciousness and freedom. Now it is necessary to take this saturated body, to seize it, to enter into it. But by the very fact that I now attempt to seize the Other's body, to pull it toward me, to grab hold of it, to bite it, my own body ceases to be flesh and becomes again the synthetic instrument *which I am*. And by the same token the *Other* ceases to be an incarnation; she becomes once more an instrument in the midst of the world which I apprehend in terms of its situation. . . This situation brings about the rupture of that reciprocity of incarnation which was precisely the unique goal of desire." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 516-517.

bodies as material subjects in-the-world, which we saw in chapter two. The lovers, then, have opened their respective subjectivities *through their bodies* like flowers that blossom to be pollinated by bees. The body which is encountered in the other through sexual intimacy is surpassed to reach their subjective consciousnesses through the freedom of their self-gift that says, "Yes, I choose to *be with you through the gift of my body.*" She becomes the gift of her body through her conscious choice, just as he becomes the gift of his body through his conscious choice, and in this act of sexual intimacy, their subjectivities are united in this furnace of free, self-giving love. The subjectivity of the other is ontologically recognized in the reception of her gift, given through her body, which she is as a person-in-the-world.

The reason why there is excitement in sexual intimacy is precisely because of the depth of the encounter with the subjectivity of the other through the body. In sexual intimacy, the distinction between the *you and the I* becomes fused into a *we*, not only on the ontological level but on the physical and psychological levels as well. We are together as a gift to each other - not as the gift of an object but as the gift of a personhood *in communion* with another. This is simultaneously a giving and a receiving of love. In sexual intimacy, the whole person is given and the whole person is received in a simultaneous union. Husband and wife become a *total gift to each other.* Pope John Paul II says that, "sex expresses an ever-new surpassing of the limit of man's solitude, which lies within the makeup of his body and determines its original meaning."[19] Their bodies are given through the union of bodily contact, and their minds are given as creative attention in the actions that they do and the words that they speak to each other. They give each other the subjectivity of their consciousnesses to be united with the subjectivity of the other through their bodies. Sexual intimacy demonstrates that subject-subject relationships are a kind of communion through our being-with-others, although we must

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[19] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 167.

emphasize that there are innumerable ways in which a subject-subject relationship can form and be fulfilled. We have seen this in the previous examples of music and humor. Indeed, in the third division of this chapter, we will see that sacrifice, and not sexual intimacy, is the highest expression of love. However, sexual intimacy remains a clear example of mutual self-giving in a subject-subject relationship. This is because we are viewing it from the viewpoint of lived human experience, rather than as a mere biological need for the survival of the species.

We, of course, must also avoid confusing the nature of love in being-with-others with a union of consciousnesses. Rather, we should think in terms of a *communion* of subjectivity. If two consciousnesses were so united that they were no longer distinguishable, they would become one consciousness and the relation between the two people would cease. Love would then be destroyed in the process. It is a paradox of love that it both unites and separates, and we will later seek to understand this paradox further. But for now, by the union of consciousnesses involved in love, in general, we should understand the deeper meaning of a subject-subject relationship as opposed to a subject-object relationship. That is to say, these kinds of relationships are *a mutual exchange of self in a communion of subjectivity*. This, then, is at the heart of the meaning of the second quality of love, for which we used the statement, "I am here with you". I offer my personhood to you, as a gift, you offer your personhood to me, as a gift, and in this exchange, we receive each other. I cannot give myself as a gift to a mere object, but only to a person who can receive my personhood as a gift that enhances their being. "I am here with you" is the gift of my being to your being, and vice versa, not as an object to be used, but as an existence to be shared. It is this existence, this intersubjective experience shared in love, which fulfills our ontological status as being-with-others and lets us know that we are not alone. That is why we named the second quality of love "I am here with you".

Also of note is that, in sexual intimacy, when two lovers give each other in this act of love, the natural result is often the

procreation of life. Again, we stumble across a demonstration of a deeper connection between being and love than has been previously suspected. We seek still to flesh out this connection, but we must note that when a male and a female give of themselves through the love of sexual intimacy, a new person can be created in the womb. The existence of another human life can be established by this act of love, and it is this fact that spurs us on in our search for the relationship between being and love. It is this connection between being and love in terms of sexual intimacy that also makes us question the use of contraception, as well as acts of homosexuality, masturbation, and anal and oral sex. In all of these cases, the act of sexual intercourse is purposefully and radically severed from the possibility of the creation of new life. In these instances, being has been deliberately disassociated from love.

We may also wonder what to make of the jealousy of romantic love. Why does the lover become jealous if he sees his beloved with another man? It is because, in sexual intimacy, the *entire* person is given, unreservedly, in an exchange of love. The body, the mind, and the consciousness are all given over to the other in the free choice of sexual intimacy, as we have seen, not as an object to be possessed, but as a person to be loved. There is no room for another in sexual intimacy since the entire person, in the fullness of their subject-mind-body, is already given and received in this action. That is why, in its fullness, it is always done within the bonds of marriage, where the spouses are already given to each other in their promises through an act of mutual reciprocity. The promises are established first to ensure the protection of the dignity of the spouses involved in sexual intimacy. Sexual intimacy is the consummation of the promises they have made to be faithful to each other and to give their whole lives to each other through the language of their bodies. That is why the promises must come first. The bodily act can only speak the truth if it is done in the context of marriage. We do not yet have all the ontological tools to investigate further into morality, but for now, we will note that Karol Wojtyla's *Love and Responsibility* contains a thorough discussion on the ethics

of sexuality which is in line with what we have discussed so far.[20] We will also touch again on the issue of morality, in a broader sense, in the final chapter of this work.

g. pornography and subject-object relations

We now must seek to compare sexual intimacy with the use of pornography to clarify our point by differentiating subject-subject relations from subject-object relations. The use of pornography is an artificial and mechanical means of sexual activity. It is "artificial" in the sense that the appearance of the act is misleading. Although the user feels pleasure and his eyes see another, the pleasure is strictly self-manufactured and isolated, and the eyes are only seeing images. When a person looks at pornography, his eyes are shielded and distanced from the eyes of the other by a gulf of space and time. The eyes of the other are nothing but a ghost that haunts the imagination. The body which is felt is only the body of the user. The body which he sees and longs to experience is disconnected from ever reaching him at that moment. His body cannot touch her body. His eyes cannot be seen in her eyes. His whispers cannot be heard in her ears. His kiss cannot taste her skin. His caress cannot feel her touch. The whole show is a façade meant to deceive the senses into a feeling of oneness with another who does not and cannot exist in that place and at that moment.

In pornography, the senses, and even the imagination, are bonded, not with another human being, but only with the representation of one. Therefore, the being of the user is separated from true sexual intimacy with the other by an unrecoverable gap. Furthermore, his being is prohibited from experiencing receptive

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[20] One of his key tenets is that, "if the sexual urge has an existential character, if it is bound up with the very existence of the human person – that first and most basic good – then it must be subject to the principles which are binding in respect of the person. Hence, although the sexual urge is there for man to use, it must never be used in the absence of, or worse still, in a way which contradicts, love for the person." Karol Wojtyla, *Love & Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 52.

love from the other and is also prohibited from giving love to the other. This is the distinction between pornography and sexual intimacy. In the act of pornography, the channel of love that flows from his being to her being, and from her being to his being, is completely severed. The only thing that can be communicated to the other and to himself is usury as a sexual object. He cannot love her; he can only use her for pleasure. She, on the other side of the image, cannot love him; she can only use him for her gain. We see here a quintessential example of a subject-object relation with another based on mutual usury that degrades the other. The ontological status then of being-with-others, cannot find satisfaction in pornography. Pornography buries this part of the user's being under the pleasure of an artificial sexual act and establishes only a subject-object relation of being-for-others. A smoke screen is thrown up, but when the pleasure ceases, the user remains alone at the core of his being. The love for which he longs has been frustrated since he cannot find a subject-subject relationship here. He remains ontologically incomplete in this act, his being-with-others is unfulfilled, and so, the act is a fraud.[21]

Now perhaps we see more clearly the bond between love and being-with-others as demonstrated by sexual intimacy in a subject-subject relationship. In sexual intimacy, our being-with-others is recovered through a free exchange of love given through the body. However, in the use of pornography, our being-with-others is lost in the conflict of using the other as a sexual object and being used as an object for their gain. In a subject-object relation with another, although intersubjectivity remains in the background, their subjectivity is disregarded and ignored in their being. The dignity of the other, as a person, is lost. In a subject-subject relation, however, their personhood is affirmed and respected. We note, then, that love establishes our being-with-others in a subject-subject relationship through the "I am here with you". It is love that guarantees a

[21] Stringer notes that, in pornography, "we are using human beings to fill our emptiness (lust) and making them the surrogate objects of our hostility (perversion) . . . Pornography creates a world of sexual illusion. . ." Stringer, *Unwanted,* 135.

subject-subject relationship, where the personhood of the other is an end in themselves, instead of a relationship based upon usury in which the person is simply an objectified means to an end. It is a relationship of love, therefore, that establishes and protects the dignity of the other as a person.

h. signs and groups

But we must ask if love is the only way in which our being-with-others can truly exist. What about groups that I belong to or the signs which are the basis of Heidegger's *mitsein*? Do not these things also establish my being-with-others? In fact, they do. When I am driving down the road, for example, I am surrounded by my being-with-others through signs, signals, lights, cars, and even the road itself. I am brought into a world that has already been marked and formed by others. Furthermore, if I belong to a group, such as a union, this is also a form of being-with-others. We come together to commiserate about working conditions, to draft articles outlining our demands, to form a brain trust about how to improve the quality of life concerning those who belong to our group - who form our being-with-others in the mode of a union. So, if we admit that being-with-others can take these other forms that do not necessarily have any aspect of love within them, have we gained anything by focusing on love to establish our being-with-others as our primary mode of existence with respect to them?

To answer this question, we must further distinguish between the examples that we have just mentioned. When I find myself in a world that has already been shaped by others, my being-with-others is indeed recovered through intersubjectivity. However, this world, in and of itself, with its signs and structures already established before my existence, does not establish an *ontological relationship* of my being-with-others. It can indeed be seen as a fact that refers me to the ontological structure of my being-with-others, but it does not inform me of the *essence* of this structure. The world states, "there are others," but goes no further. It does not give me any insight into the meaning of my being-with-others. So, although we

admit that the shaping of the world by others refers me to their existence, we deny that the meaning of this existence can be discovered through this fact. It remains a mere empty truth, like a skeleton with no flesh. It is love that gives flesh to this skeleton by answering the meaning of our being-with-others and its fulfillment. In other words, references to a larger society cannot, by themselves, inform me of how to fulfill the meaning of my being-with-others. Only love can do this.

On the other hand, when we speak of our being-with-others as belonging to a certain group, such as a union, it does refer us to a relational character of this ontological structure. We are together in mind about certain goals that we wish to accomplish. But note that it also establishes a resistance in the heart of my being-with-others. We catch sight of a conflict here, namely, the conflict between the union and the corporation. It is *us against them*. The same is true, for example, with sports fanatics, political parties, military units, etc. There are multiple groups involved, both of which have developed the ontological structure of *we*, but both of which have also set up a conflict of *they* against the other group. In other words, we have not left the notion of being-for-others in these examples.

Yes, I am indeed with others in this union, in this stadium, in this military division, in this political party, but I am only with them in so far as I am against a specified group of others. I have set up boundaries between those who are with-me and those who are not, those who are in and those who are out. I have established conflict at the heart of my being-with-others, and I have turned it into a variation of being-for-others based on groups rather than individuals. This mitigated sense of *we* eats away at the core of my being-with-others like a worm that eats away at an apple. Therefore, although we will admit that a certain structure of our being-with-others can be established through belonging to specific groups, we will deny that this is the meaning of the foundational structure of our being-with-others since it is founded instead upon a being-for-others. This form of being-with-others is, in actuality, a hidden substructure of being-for-others.

We have henceforth distinguished between two modes of

being-with-others. The first mode is being-with-others as the ontological structure that is primary over the ontological structure of being-for-others. By this first mode, we mean being-with-others as we have established through the notion of love and subject-subject relationships. The second mode is being-with-others as an ontological structure that is secondary to being-for-others. By this second mode, we mean being-with-others in a group in conflict with another group in a situation of *us against them.* Because this form of being-with-others is ontologically secondary to our being-for-others, and to avoid confusion between the two modes, we shall name this secondary structure as being-for-others-with-others.

But what about groups that are charitable or neutral in their goals, such as church groups or hobby groups, that do not set up conflicts of us against them? In these cases, we have established subject-subject relationships without the conflict of being-for other groups. Therefore, these types of groups give a further demonstration that subject-subject relationships are at the heart of being-with-others. There must be something in common that we hold together in our intersubjectivity that brings us together. Additionally, without a basic minimum atmosphere of love, the internal membership of these groups becomes a being-for, a usury of each other as objects for our own purpose. An example of this would be a poker or gambling club in which people can come together with a shared interest but possibly also for the sake of gaining money through using others. Therefore, these types of groups cannot be set up as strict counterexamples to the finding that subject-subject relationships lie at the heart of our being-with-others or that love is essential to our being-with-others. These groups, as all groups, cannot be formed without the intersubjectivity of subject-subject relationships. They are dependent upon these types of relationships for their very formation. Furthermore, without love, these groups devolve into mere subject-object relations and transform into a being-for instead of a being-with. Once again, we are led to the conclusion that love is the essence of our being-with-others since, without it, these relationships change into being-for. Only love can preserve subject-subject relationships.

Lastly, my self-identity can indeed confirm the being of others. For instance, I may have the career of a doctor, and this career can only be understood through the existence of others as patients. But again, just as with our analysis of the road signs, this example does not get us to the essence of being-with-others. For instance, I may be a doctor who has no concern or love for the other. I may simply be seeking money, respect, praise, career advancement, etc. In this case, others are for me just the means to the end of my own goals, and if this is all my being-with-others is, then we are still at the level of using others as objects. Although I am objectively helping them, they are for me on the plane of being-for-others. Therefore, even if my projects or my self-identity involve the existence of others, my being-with-them can only be fulfilled in the love of subject-subject relationships. Otherwise, it devolves back again into a subject-object relationship of being-for-others.

From the foregoing analysis, it should be clear to us that neither the world of signs and symbols, nor our belonging to groups, nor our self-identity can be the meaning of our being-with-others. As we have seen, being-with-others is the ontological structure within which the existence of others is founded. The structure of being-for-others remains ontologically secondary. We are, once again, at the center of our investigation. What is the meaning of our being-with-others? What is its essence? We must answer that the essence of our being-with-others is love because only love can be both the foundation and the fulfillment of the meaning of our being-with-others.[22] As we have seen, the world, with its shape formed by others, fails to establish the meaning of my being-with-others. Also, my being-for-others-with-others is a secondary ontological structure that cannot be the foundation of my being-with-others. Further, charitable or hobby groups depend upon fruitful subject-subject relationships for their existence. Additionally, without love, the

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[22] Marcel comes to the same conclusion when he states, "we cannot fail to see that intersubjectivity, which it is increasingly clear is the cornerstone of a concrete ontology, is after all nothing but charity itself." Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume 2: Faith & Reality*, trans. René Hague (Lanham: University Press of America, 1979), 170.

being-with-others in my self-identity fails to escape from the pitfalls of being-for-others. Lastly, we have noted that Sartre's notion of being-for-others is not my primary relation with others since, prior to conflict with them, I must be in a situation with them through intersubjectivity.

It appears to us then, that only love can provide us with the foundation of the ontological structure of our being-with-others *as well as* the fullness of the meaning of our being-with-others in relation to them. According to Viktor Frankl, "no one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him."[23] We now know why this is the case. Love both establishes and fulfills our being-with-others by connecting us through an authentic subject-subject relationship. Without love, the essence of the other remains distanced from us because we are treating them as an object to be used instead of a subject-person to be respected.

It is the first quality of love, the "I am here," which we have used to show that love can be (but does not necessarily *have* to be) the foundation of our discovery of the subjectivity of other consciousnesses. It is the second quality of love, the "I am here with you," which we have used to show the meaning of our being-with-others as a loving subject-subject relationship. We used the examples of music, humor, and sexual intimacy to elucidate the nature of these subject-subject relationships which form our being-with-others as relationships whereby the personhood of the other is affirmed. Therefore, from our investigation into the first two qualities of love, we have discovered love as the meaning and essence of our being-with-others because, without love, we remain alienated from the other, either through conflict (as in our being-for-others) or through indifference (as in the world already shaped by others). Love, then, is the only way in which our being-with-others can truly exist in its ontological fullness.

Division Three - The Third Quality of Love - "I am here for you"

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[23] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 111.

It is now our task to investigate further the meaning of love and give a specific answer to the question: what is love? This we shall show through our third and final quality of love, namely, "I am here for you". Immediately, we must recognize that we are not on the level of being-for-others since we are not speaking of a subject-object relationship, but a subject-subject relationship. We will now delve further into the nature of this subject-subject relationship that we may have with others. Just as we did with the concept of Being, we will also do with the concept of love. We must first state what it is not. First, love is not a phenomenon of the world, and therefore its meaning cannot be explained in terms of worldly phenomena, as an object could. Earlier we stated that the essence of an object in the world is the totality of its appearances, but since love is not a phenomenon, we cannot define it this way. It is indeed tempting to say that love is nothing more than the series of actions that demonstrate it. However, we cannot admit to this since, as we have seen, love is not just concerned with outward appearances. Love is connected to the subjectivity of the persons as the fullness of the meaning of their being-with-others.

Similarly, we cannot say that love is simply an emotion or an act of the will. That would be to turn love into a phenomenon of the mind, which again, it cannot be reduced to since it can be the ontological foundation of our being-with-others. We have shown that this is an ontological, and not a psychological or mental connection since it is concerned with the very being of the person. On that note, Dr. Baars states, "there is little actual doing involved in affirmation. Authentic affirmation is first of all a state of being. Only secondarily may it lead to doing, to acts, to words, that may then complete the affirmation of the other."[24] Therefore, we cannot seek the meaning of love in the phenomena of the world or the phenomena of the mind. However, we must utilize a careful description of certain situational examples of love to tease out its meaning. What then, is love?

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[24] Baars, M.D., *Born Only Once,* 15.

i. loneliness and shame

It will behoove us to begin by looking into a phenomenological description of loneliness to clarify our notion of love since there is an intuitive connection between loneliness, love, and being-with-others. We may say, symbolically speaking, that loneliness burns at the heart of the person. What does this mean? If we were to describe it further, we might say that it manifests itself in a sort of emotional aching that emanates from the center of the body outward through the limbs. It is like a vice upon the mind, constricting its thought. It is an isolation, an alienation from relationships with others. *There is no one here to be with me. No one to share existence with. No one who can relate to my pain. I am alone in my suffering*. In loneliness, I exist this alienation from others through these phenomena of the mind and body. On the level of ontology, loneliness is not just to be alone, for we can be alone without being lonely, but it is to project isolation from others onto our existence. When I am lonely, I am no longer existing my being-with-others. I am just this body, this mind, this consciousness. A part of my being has been cut from me, and this is why loneliness feels like a gaping hole in my heart. My existence is diminished. But we must again draw our attention to the difference between loneliness and being alone. I can be alone and still exist my being-with-others. On the other hand, I can be surrounded by others and still be lonely. Let us investigate these instances further.

I am in a bar with a friend. We order drinks, laugh, chat, etc. I am with-him in my existence. We are sharing this situation in a subject-subject relationship. But now it is time for him to go. He has another engagement to attend. We part ways and I am left *alone* in the bar. True, there are still others in the bar with me. The din of the crowd and the loud commotion of drinks being poured and served and orders being taken still pound at my ears. I feel the warmth of all the bodies surrounding me and become claustrophobic. I feel confused about what to do or where to go. I feel their eyes weighing upon my shoulders. Do I look awkward sitting here?

Should I go out to get some fresh air? Should I go home? I have lost the person who was the subjective-pole around which I had established my being-with-others. Now he is gone and sorely missed. I am no longer with the others in the bar. They remain at a distance from me in the form of being-for-others. As far as thetic consciousness is concerned, we are mere objects for each other. I have lost contact with my subject-subject relationship in the form of being-with-others even though I am surrounded by them. I am alone among a crowd of others.

On the other hand, I may be alone in my room, but working on a creative outlet, such as writing a song. I exist my being-with-others through this songwriting. I expect it to be heard when I play at the concert venue next week. I imagine the audience listening and their reaction as I play. Through my songwriting, I am with-them even though I am alone. I arrange the lyrics and the chord progressions in such a way as to make them feel the emotions that I wish to express. I am already reaching out to their subjectivity through my subjective creativity. Therefore, even though I am alone, I am still with-others in my being.

Loneliness, then, exists for me when I am no longer living out my being-with-others. We have said it is like a gaping hole in my being which could have a multitude of causes. A broken relationship, a failed attempt at an activity, an unannounced depression, the end of a party, a traumatic experience, etc. may cause me to isolate myself in my being so as to be cut from the subject-subject relationship of being-with-others.[25] That is, of course, not to say that others cease to exist. As we have mentioned, we are always

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[25] Particularly harmful to our interpersonal connections are the effects of trauma: "The prefrontal cortex (PFC) normally helps us to assess the person coming toward us, and our mirror neurons help to pick up his intentions. However, the subjects with PTSD did not activate any part of their frontal lobe, which means they could not muster any curiosity about the stranger. They just reacted with intense activation deep inside their emotional brains, in the primitive areas known as the Periaqueductal Gray, which generates startle, hypervigilance, cowering, and other self-protective behaviors. There was no activation of any part of the brain involved in social engagement." Van der Kolk, M.D., *The Body Keeps the Score,* 104. We will have reason to come back to this point in chapter seven.

in the shared situation of being-with-others through the intersubjectivity of being-in-the-world with them. What then do we mean when we say that our being-with-others is lived or that I exist my being-with-others? We mean that, without a deep love that has affirmed the center of our being and that we can share with others, our existence remains lacking and incomplete. Kohak states, "solitude need not be loneliness: it can also be the cure of loneliness. It is not a matter of 'learning to live without others,' but rather of learning to live with nature and others, not outshouting them with our insistent presence, but being instead ready to see and hear, in love and respect."[26]

The being of the human person yearns for fulfillment in love. A depressed person, for example, can be surrounded by people and chatting with them, filling the hours with small talk and remain unfulfilled. Something is lacking in the conversation. It is not a true sharing of being in the sense of love. She leaves the conversation feeling somewhat empty, perhaps superficially satisfied, but in the depths of her heart, there is a longing for love that has not been quenched. On the other hand, she can be with someone she loves and be filled in her being without speaking. The love is transferred without the need for words. The longing in the heart is satisfied without speech. She leaves this encounter feeling her existence filled to the brim. The great thirst for love has been quenched.

This connection between the fulfillment of our being-with-others through love can also be seen in the phenomenon of shame. In shame, a person thinks and feels that they are unlovable in their being. They experience themselves, therefore, as sub-human, as unworthy of being placed on the same level as others. They feel denied at the very core of who they are. As we noted in the first division of this chapter, this sense of denial can lead to suicidal tendencies because of the ontological connection between being and love. When love is lacking, or incapable of being received, my very being becomes threatened. Life itself seems to become a painful torture that I must attempt to escape. I have been cut off from any

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[26] Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars,* 40.

meaningful relationship with others because I have been cut off from love, and this gulf mutilates my being to such an extent that a continued existence seems an unbearable burden.

The incapability to give and receive love, as in the phenomenon of shame, gives us another avenue into the same insight as loneliness: there is a sort of flow of love that does not merely exist at the level of phenomena but reaches to the heart of our being. When I am lonely or when I am filled with shame, I experience the dissatisfaction of a lack *within my being*. My whole existence becomes twisted and distorted until it is no longer recognizable. I no longer recognize who I am, and I feel lost to myself. And yet, when someone reaches out to me and reveals my own goodness to me, healing can begin. I no longer experience my existence as a withered flower. It blossoms again because love has nourished my being and restored my own sense of goodness.

From the previous examples of loneliness and shame, we are beginning to see that love travels directly from being to being. The medium through which love travels is the phenomena of the world, a touch, a look, a word, or the phenomena of the mind, an emotion, an act of the will. As John Paul II states, "The human body . . . contains . . . *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift* and – through this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence."[27] This transfer of love through the world and the mind has its origin and its end in the being of the persons involved. It is a call and response from the being of one person to the being of another. What do we mean that love is transferred from being to being? We must investigate further.

j. the transfer of love

Let us now dive deeper into two questions we have posed in the preceding section. These questions were: what do we mean when we say that our being-with-others is lived or that I exist my being-with-others? And, what do we mean that love is transferred

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[27] John Paul II, *A Theology of the Body*, 185-186.

from being to being? It will do us well to answer our later question first. When we say that love is transferred from being to being, we mean that love is an affirmation of the being of the other from the heart of our being. We know that a person is a subject and that we exist in intersubjectivity with others. In other words, others form an integral part of our existence as persons. We are not alone in our situation of being-in-the-world. It is written into our human existence that we exist amidst and among others, as we have seen. We can take three stances in reference to the existence of any particular other at any particular time; we may affirm their existence, reject their existence, or remain indifferent to their existence.

We will take these stances one at a time, beginning with hatred as an example of rejection. When I hate someone, it is because they affect me in my being. I wish they did not exist. I wish my world was without them. Here we have the ontological origin of murder. The biblical story of Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis portrays this well. Cain is envious of his brother Abel because Abel's sacrifice was more pleasing to God. After the murder, Cain is asked by God, "Where is Abel your brother?" Cain's answer is revealing of the nature of hatred: "Am I my brother's keeper?"[28] Hatred is a disconnection of our being-with-others. It is the introduction of conflict into our intersubjectivity with them. It is a rejection of their existence. Of course, hatred does not have to end in murder as it can be restrained through our freedom. But our point here is that rejection of the other is one ontological stance that we can have towards them, and this stance is a denial of their existence from the heart of my existence. I wish my being-in-the-world was without their presence. Hatred exists on the plane of being-for-others, as in Sartre.

I can also be indifferent to others. I may pass by countless others in a shopping mall. They walk in a faceless stream with and against the direction in which I am going. I hardly notice them. I am focused on getting to my destination, and they simply form the background of my situation just as the shop signs, the walls, the

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[28] Genesis 4:9 (RSV)

lights, and the floor tiles. In the stance of indifference, others form a non-thetic background. I am with-them in the sense of Heidegger's *mitsein*, which we spoke of earlier, but I cannot say that indifference is the meaning of my being-with-them. It is neither a rejection nor an acceptance of their being. They are simply there, and I do not consider them further. They do whatever they want, and anything may happen to them without any concern from me.

Lastly, I can affirm the existence of others through love. Here we come to the meaning and fulfillment of our being-with-others. When I love another through friendship, for example, I accept their existence into my existence. I accept their subjectivity in my subjectivity. Not as an absorption in which I annihilate their subjectivity into my subjectivity, for then there could be no relationship, but as an acceptance of my being-with-them which forms a part of my being-in-the-world. I accept them into the intersubjectivity which we share in our experiences. I want them to be happy. I want them to form a part of the world in which I find myself. I want them to succeed in their endeavors. I comfort them when they are sorrowful. I am joyful with them in their happiness. My existence is shared with their existence, not through indifference, but through affirming love in which their being finds a welcome home in my existence.

According to Dr. Baars, "I affirm another when I recognize that he is good, worthwhile, and lovable – precisely the way he is – period, without the usual addition of 'in spite of his shortcomings,' since this implies that my recognition and feeling of his goodness is conditional and that he must *do* something."[29] In other words, we do not wait to love them until they have satisfied the prerequisites that we have determined for them to meet to be lovable. Love, in the sense that we mean, is a greeting to the being of the other. This is ontologically what it means to nod, wave, or say hello to another. It is an acknowledgment of their subjectivity in such a way as to make it known that they are welcomed into the world that we share.

There is, in the Zulu culture, a greeting where they say,

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[29] Baars, M.D., *Born Only Once,* 26.

"*sawubona.*" Translated literally, it means, "I see you."[30] It is a way of stating that, when you see another, you embrace their existence, and likewise, through the same greeting, they embrace the existence of the other in you. It is a mutual exchange of intersubjectivity. This is what we mean when we say that love is transferred from being to being. In my being-with-others, which forms a part of my being-as-person, love welcomes the being-as-person of the other. My existence is not an isolated one. It is a shared existence through intersubjectivity. When I am loved by another, when they are with me, my being is affirmed. I find that I have a place in this world. Through the acceptance of others in love, a sort of sanctified space is carved out in the world for me. I belong. I am accepted here. My existence is welcomed. Love is an affirmation of my being.

We also sometimes speak of feeling "big" or "small" in the world, and this feeling is directly related to our being-with-others. When we say we feel small, we are saying that we are diminished by others in relation to them. When my being is rejected by others through hatred and denial, or when I remain merely indifferent to them, I am small. I am unnoticed. I tread through the world alienated from others. It is no wonder that this way of speaking is often connected to being part of a large corporation, a factory worker, a machinist, or life in the big city. The individual becomes lost in the mass of humanity, a mere object on the peripheries of their non-thetic indifference, and they feel small. We may think of

[30] Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, "I See You, I Am Here: The Secret to Heartfelt Communication," Lion's Roar, June 2, 2021, https://www.lionsroar.com/i-see-you-i-am-here-the-secret-to-heartfelt-communication/.

Gabriel Marcel's work *Man Against Mass Society*.[31] On the other hand, I may feel bigger than others. I am at the top of the corporate ladder or I own the highest, richest condo in the city, and I look down on the others in the street like ants. Again, my being-with-others is not fulfilled. They are objects to be scorned unless they are part of the elite like myself. But in between these two extremes, we may find our being to fit in. When a husband is at home with his wife, or when I am with my friends, or when I am alone in nature, I feel that I belong. I am neither too big nor too small. I am here in-the-world-with-others-as-belonging. It is love that brings my being to its proper balance of existence.

k. existing our love

Now we are in a position to answer our second question from the beginning of the previous section: what does it mean to say I exist my being-with-others? When we say that I exist my being-with-others, we mean that it is part of who I am as a person. We have stated several times that a person is a body, a mind, and a consciousness. Now we must add another ontological element to personhood, namely, a relationship with others. As we have seen, there are three ontological stances that we may have towards others: affirmation, rejection, or indifference. Furthermore, we have seen that rejection and indifference are not a fulfillment of our being-with-others. Only love, as an affirmation of the existence of others, can fulfill this part of our being-as-persons. Therefore, to say that we exist our being-with-others means that we affirm them in love and are affirmed by them in love. In this mutual affirmation, our

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[31] Marcel argues that the progress of technology, what he calls "techniques", tends to lead to a view of the human person on the utilitarian level. Our personhood then becomes degraded, and we become objectified as a small, replaceable cog in a giant machine. For example, he states, "the development of techniques does inevitably tend to give a primacy, at the practical level, to the idea of output . . . Man is thought of on the model of a machine, on the model of a mere physical object – since in fact he is being treated as if he *were* a mere physical object." Gabriel Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society*, trans. G.S. Fraser (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2008), 71.

being-with-others rounds out our existence as persons because they form a part of our being. I exist my relationship with others, and in love, I fulfill my being-with-others.

We are not yet at the end of our investigation into love, however, and we must continue to probe into what we mean by our third quality of love - "I am here for you". What does it mean to be there for someone, to care for them? It means to do what is best for them as a person, which includes their body, mind, consciousness, and relationship with others. When we care for someone, we cannot just care for a part of them, and when we are there for them, we are there for the *whole* person. This is also what we mean by treating others with dignity. We must acknowledge their subjectivity as it is present through their whole being, and we must respect their whole being as part of their personhood.

Let us take the treatment of a drug addict as an example. Someone who is addicted to drugs in their body and their mind, and is going through withdrawal, must be cared for in such a way as to bring about the health of the whole person. It may be tempting to say, "let them have their drugs since they want them and they are not hurting anyone besides themselves." We may think that this is a way of respecting their subjective freedom. But such a view is false because it is a discreet indifference to them. It is an untruthful pretense of care. Even if the addict strongly desires her drugs, and even if she chooses to prolong her addiction through their use, we cannot say that enabling her to do so is caring for her since it is ultimately a destruction of her being-as-person. The drugs do damage to her body, her mind, and even her being-with-others. It is not in her best interests to continue down that path, and the person who truly loves and cares for her can see the truth in this, even if she cannot. To be there for a drug addict is to assist them through withdrawal so that they can be freed from their addiction and heal their being. It is for a similar reason that good parents find appropriate ways to discipline their children out of love so that they may become better people. It is easy to think that we are respecting the freedom of others by shrugging our shoulders and letting them travel down a road that is harmful to them. However, such a view is

indifference toward the other. It essentially says, "I do not care what you do to yourself to make yourself happy as long as you are not hurting anyone else." But this is not love since it does not care for the well-being of the *whole* person.

What we see from these examples is that love can sometimes take the form of a disagreement with the other and even appear as a conflict when it is to promote the health and wholeness of their being-as-person. C.S. Lewis differentiates between kindness and authentic love by saying, "There is kindness in Love: but Love and kindness are not coterminous, and when kindness . . . is separated from the other elements of Love, it involves a certain fundamental indifference to its object, and even something like contempt of it."[32] Allowing someone to live in a state of illness and lies is not affirmation. Affirmation sees the truth, beauty, and goodness in them *as they already are*, and through loving them unselfishly and unconditionally, brings out more of those qualities so that they become the fullness of themselves. Love draws out the goodness of the other, not through severity, but through attraction and desire – an inner movement toward what is truly good. This may, however, mean suffering for the beloved. It is love to allow the drug addict to go through the pain of withdrawal. It is love to allow a narcissist to be devastated by the insight that they are not the center of the universe. It is love to allow a child to have a tantrum instead of getting what they unreasonably demand.

Love may indeed allow the other to suffer when it is for their ultimate good and when there is no way around it. However, love does not *abandon* the person in their suffering, nor does love *want* the other to suffer. It is also painful for the lover to see his beloved suffer, even when he knows it is for her good that she must go through this. Furthermore, this must be done with compassion that does not *force* the other into such a situation through a possessive and controlling disposition towards them. The freedom of the other must be respected so that they may be allowed to change at their own pace and in their own time. It is the role of the lover to simply

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[32] C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 32.

love with constancy and draw out the goodness that is already in them.

We will lastly note that there is not necessarily a correlation between great intellect and great love. We earlier said that love is not a phenomenon of the mind, and we have seen the reason for this is that love has to do with the being of the person. People with severe mental disabilities, for instance, are still capable of giving and receiving love because love is concerned with being and not intellect. The dignity of others comes from their being-as-person. All persons are capable of existing their being-with-others through the giving and receiving of love, and therefore, all persons have intrinsic worth and dignity.

l. love and appearances

Just as we stated that Being takes ontological precedence over appearances, we can come to the same conclusion regarding love. Love does not limit itself based upon the *appearance* of the other, rather it is concerned with the *being* of the other. When a person truly loves another, their focus is not on how they appear; their focus is on the dignity of the other as a person. For example, a wife may assist her ailing husband who has Alzheimer's disease by caring for him in their home. She may spend time taking him to the bathroom and feeding him. There is nothing aesthetically pleasing about these activities. When she changes him, she smells the odor of urine and fecal matter; when she feeds him, he spits up the food that she must patiently wipe from his face; he wakes her up in the middle of the night by making noise and wandering around the house; he cannot remember her name or who she is in relation to him, etc. But none of this prevents her from doing an act of love for him. She keeps taking him to the bathroom, feeding him, being patient with him in his needs, not holding it against him that he does not remember her name or say thank you to her, etc. She prays with him. She supports him and encourages him.

When she engages with him through these activities, the love which she gives to him through her words and actions attempts to

send a message to him. I am here. I am here with you. I am here for you. You are good and worthwhile because you are my husband. You are worthy of my time and energy. I am reaching out to you to help you and give you comfort. Your existence is good. You are loveable. We see in this scenario that love is an affirmation of the existence of the other as good. It is an invitation to share in each other's existence in a way that affirms that shared existence. I am here for you. I will do what I can to help you realize your full humanity as much as possible. Love is an affirmation of the other as worthy of sacrificing for them. I offer this money, this time, this energy, and these prayers for you. Why? Because you are worth it. You are good. I am happy that you exist. At the end of *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky speaks of the relationship that developed between Raskolnikov, the murderer, and Sonia, the prostitute, while he was in prison. He states, "They were renewed by love; the heart of each *held infinite sources of life* for the heart of the other."[33] They find the affirmation of each other's existence in their shared love, being there for each other in mutual support.

But love does not end there. It goes beyond the person and into Being. Love does not just affirm the being of the other, it affirms Being too. At its height, love affirms all existence and even Being itself as good. There are no phenomenal limits to love. It cannot be caged in by phenomena but instead reaches out to Being. Love extends beyond the given situation, the given moment, and affirms life itself, existence itself. It proclaims that it is good to exist. This is why, in another of Dostoevsky's works, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Alyosha, at the pivotal moment in his life, in the moment of his greatest distress, when all seemed lost and the darkness that covered his mind became pierced by the understanding of love, falls to the earth under the starry night sky and embraces it.

Dostoevsky puts it thus, "He did not know why he was embracing it. He could not have explained to himself why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss it all, but he kissed it weeping,

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[33] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment,* trans. Constance Garnett (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2001), 429. (emphasis added)

sobbing and drenching it with his tears, and vowed frenziedly to love it, to love it for ever and ever."[34] Love, at its climax, cannot confine itself to just one instance or just one person. It spills out over all existence. It affirms everyone and everything in the universe. When I love another, when I give food to the hungry, money to the poor, or words of comfort to the suffering, I do more than just affirm them as an individual. I affirm Being by fighting for the goodness of existence. This is why Alyosha, "had fallen upon the earth a weak youth, but he rose from it a resolute fighter for the rest of his life, and he realized and felt it suddenly, at the very moment of his rapture."[35] Love finds its fulfillment in Being. Being is the end of love.

m. the source of love

When I am the beloved, when I am the recipient of the love of another, I discover the source of love. Just as I can love another beyond the state of their appearance, so I find that I can be loved beyond the state of my appearance to the other. I am a child who is sick with the flu, for instance. I writhe in pain and sweat, I vomit into the bucket by my bed, and I need fluids and sustenance to be brought to me. I am ungrateful and agitated, but still, I find that I am the recipient of my mother's love. She puts a wet towel on my forehead, takes my temperature, brings ginger ale with ice to sip on, brings pretzels to ease my stomach, and cleans the vomit out of the bucket. She looks beyond the grossness of my illness, she looks beyond the fact that she is putting herself in a position to catch the same virus, and she continues to love. She gives me comforting words. In her words and actions, she is saying the same thing. I am here for you. It is good for you to exist. You are worthwhile. Your suffering will pass, and until it does, I will be right here to help you. When I am loved in this way, I do not just feel that I am loved by

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[34] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. David Magarshack (New York: Penguin Books, 1958), 426.

[35] Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 427.

one person. When I am loved in my being, beyond my mere appearance, I find the embrace of humanity. I feel a sense of belonging. An ontological space has been carved out for my existence. I understand that my existence is good, and I have an unalienable right to live. But how is this possible?

Let us examine this further. As the beloved, I am aware of a sense of belonging stemming from existence itself. When I discover first love with a girl, perhaps she has given me her first kiss, and I am swooning in love, I do not find that she is the source of love, but that her love for me is an echo calling out from the heart of existence. Her love for me goes beyond emotions and appearances to reach my existence as such. That is to say, as the beloved, I am affirmed in my subject-being as opposed to my appearance, and it is this that gives rise to my joy. Love reaches my existence in that my existence is welcomed for no other reason than I exist. Through her love, my subjective existence, as the beloved, is justified in its being. It is good that I exist. I belong. This is what the joy of being the beloved reveals to us.

When I discover that I am accepted, that I am loved, I discover the welcome of my existence, not only in the heart of the other but also in the heart of existence itself. Her love reveals to me that I am embraced in my being by Being. How else could I be affirmed in my existence as such? A finite individual, without the assistance of Being, cannot reach my subjective being, but only my body and mind as objects-in-the-world. But an object cannot give and receive love. Only by her participation in Being as a subject, in her being-with-others, can she affirm me in my existence as such. It requires the activity of subjective awareness to fully participate in Being. Furthermore, it is only through this participation in Being that love can be transmitted because only Being can reach my existence. This is because only Being is existence in its essence. Since love transcends the phenomena of my mind and body to reach my subjective being, it is Being that I discover as the source of love and not phenomena.

This is revealed to me since she, as a person who participates in Being, has access to my being-with-others through love. In other

words, being-with-others, and not mere phenomena, is how her love is capable of affirming my existence as the beloved. This also means that consciousness cannot be the source of love since love reaches my subjective being through my being-with-others and is not limited to the consciousness-phenomena dyad. In the consciousness-phenomena dyad, I remain isolated in subject-object relationships. But love surpasses this dyad through being-with-others. Her love reaches the heart of my existence, and this is only possible because it is connected to the act-of-being itself.

The lover, therefore, can speak on behalf of Being because she participates in Being through her subject-being. Through her love, therefore, I am claimed by Being, and Being then speaks to me, "It is good that you exist." Through her love, I am invited by Being to participate with my subject-being. This is how the ontological space is carved out for me in the affirmation of love. I discover that her love rises from Being to give me belonging. From the heart of this girl, from her subjective being, I am affirmed. And in receiving her affirmation, I discover the affirmation of Being itself, which is necessary for the completion of my joy as beloved.

The joy of being the beloved reveals Being as the source of love because only through her participation in Being can she reach my subjective existence to give me this joy. Love reveals to me that my existence is not affirmed by just an individual or a group of people, but that I am affirmed by Being. Being is revealed as the source of love because love transcends the finite realm of the consciousness-phenomena dyad and fulfills my subject-being through being-with-others. This is where my rights and dignity as a person come from - not from individuals, who would otherwise remain on the level of appearances, but from Being itself as revealed by love. *Individuals are the messengers of Being* through which I can discover my dignity through being-with-others. There is a specific love of another individual that, when welcomed by myself, leads to discovering my own place in existence, my own goodness, and the goodness of Being. That is why the beloved can say to the lover, "you have shown me that there is more to myself than I ever knew." It is in the joy of being the beloved that I discover myself as

worthy of existence and that I discover Being as the source of my worth.

We have discovered then, through our analysis of love, that Being is the source and end of love. Being is the alpha and the omega in the circuit of love because love transcends the consciousness-phenomena dyad on both sides. Love emanates from Being and ends in the affirmation of Being. Love, from the affirmation of the lover, reveals Being as the end of love, and love, from the joy of the beloved, reveals that Being is the source of love. Love springs forth from the heart of Being, and Being claims love as its own.

On the other hand, when we consider hatred and indifference, we discover that they deny the being of the other and have their end in non-being. We may then wonder what is the source of hatred and indifference. It seems to us now that the source cannot be Being since it is a break in the bonds of our being-with-others. Rather, their source must be found in the non-being which is inherent in the phenomena of the mind and the world. Hatred originates in my perception of the possible non-being of the other through the non-being aspect of the phenomena and does not escape the subject-object dyad of being-for-others. As a denial of existence, hatred cannot have its source in Being. Additionally, indifference is a disregard for the existence of others that, as such, does not fulfill the meaning of our being-with-others. Indifference, just as hatred, is trapped in the relation of perceiver-perceived found in the phenomena. This is to be contrasted with love as the fulfillment of our being-with-others which finds its origin and end in Being. We may recall in chapter three that we stated that lies, ugliness, and evil are a privation of truth, beauty, and goodness. A similar point can be made here about hatred and indifference. Properly speaking, they are only privations of love that stem from non-being.

Perhaps now we see why, in chapter one, we stated that it is more authentic to decide to live in the most fundamental reality. If I choose purposefully to live in a virtual reality, then I am inhibited in my possibility of encountering others in a truly meaningful subject-subject relationship. We must seek to live in the most fundamental

reality of which we are aware so that our being-with-others may find its fulfillment in and through the self-gift of our active bodies-in-the-world. In this way, our love may fully reach others in their depths. It is in this world, as we exist, where we seek to encounter others. True, our being-with-others is written into every reality because our human existence is incomprehensible without it, and there is always the possibility of encountering others as subjects, even in a virtual reality. Yet, it is in our fundamental reality that we can realize the full meaning of a giving and receiving relationship in communion with another. This is precisely because of the role of the body as our ontologically primary way of being-in-the-world which enables love to be manifested in it. In virtual reality, the other, as well as myself, will always remain, to at least some extent, a representation, an image, a semblance of who we really are.

At this point, and for the sake of clarity, we must briefly also raise the issue of suffering, although we are not yet prepared for a full discussion on the topic. When we say that love is the affirmation of all existence, we must be clear that we are not stating that it is the affirmation of evil and suffering in the world, as if we were stating that suffering in-itself was good. This is because suffering is a deprivation of what is good. Just as hatred and indifference stem from non-being, so suffering is a break in Being. Rather, we only mean that love affirms the goodness of life *despite the evil and suffering that are in the world*. Love sees the goodness, beauty, and truth of life beyond suffering because these things are rooted in Being, which is affirmed by love. We will take up the topic of suffering again later on, but for the moment we are only clarifying what we meant when we said that love affirms all existence.

n. forgiveness

Next, we will turn our attention to the phenomenon of forgiveness to ask what it may teach us about love. It certainly happens that we hurt others and that others hurt us in life, and this hurt can, at times, go very deep. We can suffer traumatic experiences at the hands of others that limit our capacity to give and

receive love.[36] These incidents drive wedges between persons and break the ontological bonds that form our being-with-others through love, which we noted in our brief discussion on shame. Forgiveness re-establishes those bonds. Forgiveness is a re-acknowledgment of the dignity of the personhood of the other. We have stated that appearances cannot stop love from reaching the being of the other. Now, we have a stronger statement that love can even overcome internal pain, wrongdoing, and division between persons by repairing the relationship at the level of being.

In forgiveness, the one who is offended re-affirms the being of the offender, despite their offense. The forgiver does not need to change their opinion of the offense. The wrongdoing of the forgiven one remains wrongdoing. Nothing can change that. Forgiveness requires that the wrongdoing is acknowledged in order to be surpassed. What changes is that the forgiver recognizes the freedom and subject-personhood of the forgiven one through an act of love. Forgiveness is an act of love that gives ontological space to the offender so that they may learn and grow from their wrongdoing through the use of their freedom.

If the forgiveness is accepted, and the offender tries to make amends by changing his life, it is a chance for him to re-discover the meaning of his being-with-others, which is love. Forgiveness plants a seed of love in the heart of the offender so that he may have the opportunity to nurture it and obtain the fullness of his humanity in his being-with-others. The forgiver looks beyond the offense in order to re-accept the being of the forgiven one, and the forgiven one is given an opportunity to re-establish his ontological bond with the

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[36] According to Dr. Van der Kolk, "While human contact and attunement are the wellspring of physiological self-regulation, the promise of closeness often evokes fear of getting hurt, betrayed, and abandoned. Shame plays an important role in this: 'You will find out how rotten and disgusting I am and dump me as soon as you really get to know me.' Unresolved trauma can take a terrible toll on relationships. If your heart is still broken because you were assaulted by someone you loved, you are likely to be preoccupied with not getting hurt again and fear opening up to someone new. In fact, you may unwittingly try to hurt them before they have a chance to hurt you." Van der Kolk, M.D., *The Body Keeps the Score*, 213.

forgiver. Through the delivery and acceptance of forgiveness, love triumphs over wrongdoing and bring the fullness of existence back to humanity (in its being-with-others) after it has been lost through division. Of course, we are here speaking of the best-case scenario, which oftentimes does not play itself out in our fractured world. But, our purpose here is to show what is ontologically possible.

What unforgiveness does, on the other hand, is trap both persons in the past without the possibility of moving forward in their relationship. If I find out that I am gossiped about by a co-worker and lose my job because of this slander, my memory calls forth this event every time I see this person or think about them again. If I develop a grudge against them and refuse to work toward forgiveness, then our relationship cannot move forward past that point in time. I relive the past harm over and over again without the benefit of a restored relationship. Moreover, If I deliberately sustain my unforgiveness, I cling to the past harm of the offender, and in a sense, I *possess* them as an object with it. In my mind, my grievance against them can be used as a weapon that I can hold against them which gives me the illusion of control over them. By purposefully refusing to work toward forgiveness of another, I imprison them in the past and deny their freedom as a subject-person to transcend that moment and begin a new life. This power over them allows me to curse them in my heart, to seek revenge upon them, to make them the object of my hatred and the reason for my misery.

And indeed, they have become the reason for my misery because I deliberately cling to that offense and define my life by it. I refuse to move beyond it instead of seeking reconciliation in my own heart. The irony of the prison that I seek to lock them in is that I must lock myself in with them and deny myself the opportunity as a subject-person to transcend that moment also. Yet, seeking forgiveness in my heart breaks through the bonds of the past and sets my being free to grow in love again. Furthermore, it gives the offender the ontological space they need to grow in love also. The chain of the offense that bound us both to the past is broken through working toward reconciliation so that both of us can rediscover the freedom of our subject-personhood to be fulfilled in authentic being-

with-others. By seeking to forgive, we let go of the other as an object of our hatred that we grip with the stranglehold of revenge, and we allow ourselves to move beyond the incident into the present and future of refreshed love.

Now, it must be reiterated that we are here speaking abstractly and philosophically. In concrete life, the suffering of trauma at the hands of another can take years, decades, or even a lifetime to work through at the level of psychology in one's thoughts and feelings. It is important not to rush or bypass this work by forcing forgiveness when one is not ready. We must acknowledge that forgiveness is a process, and if we use dramatic language to describe this from a phenomenological viewpoint, it is to emphasize what forgiveness and unforgiveness can teach us about the ontological relationship between love and being-with-others. Indeed, it teaches us not only about the ontological relationship itself, but also about the power of love to heal wounds at the level of our being. Because of its crucial importance to our wholeness, forgiveness is a goal that we should work toward, even if the results are mixed and take a lifetime.

o. grief

Another phenomenon that can give us insight into the deep connection between being and love is *grief*. We mentioned earlier in the chapter that there is a difference between missing an object and missing a person in that, when we miss a person, we wonder how they are doing or what they might be doing, and when we catch up with them, we inquire about these things. In other words, we grieve the loss of persons differently, more profoundly, than the loss of things because we acknowledge their subjectivity, their personhood, in a part of our own being. But now we can go even further and see that the phenomenon of grief shows us that love is connected to Being.

When I experience grief, it is like an earthquake at the foundation of my own being, shaking my life. At the height of grief, I literally fall to my knees trembling and sobbing, unable to stay

upright, unable to steady myself. I live in my body the reality that is happening in the depths of my being. It feels as though a part of my life is being wrenched away, and there is nothing I can do. I have to face my lack of control over the situation. I ultimately have to reorganize my life in order to move forward.

But this is different than when I have to reorganize my life around a missing object. If an object is missing, I can find a replacement or use other objects in its place. This may be made more difficult if it is connected sentimentally to a particular person because it made up a part of their being-in-the-world through their own active body, as we saw in chapter two. Therefore, I recognize a piece of them in the object. But when we are talking about the person themself, there is no possibility of replacement. There is only absence that cannot be filled. Rather, the reorganizing has to happen at the level of meaning. I must discover new meaning in my life, and we are now in the position to understand why.

Being-with-others is a part of our being, and love and being are ontologically united within my own being. The beloved made up a major part of my existence in my love for her. Through the reciprocity of love, we gave and received each other's goodness, and in this process, I discovered our own goodness. But now that she is gone, this reciprocity suffers decay at the very core of my being, and I feel it as such. She is no longer here with me. The communion between us has been replaced by a void. My being-with-others is damaged. I feel isolated. It is hard for me to even connect with others who are well meaning and are "sorry for my loss." There is only a sort of numbness, a darkness that settles in as I realize that there is nothing I can do to change the situation. This is where despair can threaten my own existence with a sense of hopelessness that has a corrosive effect at the core of my being.

But I do not have to be without hope. Under the tumult of the loss, I find the ground of Being beneath me, supporting me. I implicitly understand that my being-with-others is not solely dependent upon her physical presence. I come to realize that my love for her is not entirely lost but is retained within Being. The love that always reached out to her, that reached out beyond her to

embrace all existence, is still reaching out, still groping for new understanding, new meaning, still affirming existence-itself. Additionally, the love that I received from her, that affirmed my existence, that grounded my sense of goodness, has not been a waste. I still carry it within me, and her voice still calls out from Being that I am good in the very depths of my existence. It is this that enables me to keep going.

In working through my grief, I come to discover that she is still with me as a *presence* at the heart of Being that reaches me in my being. This presence is made possible precisely because of her love for me and my love for her. She is a presence that is loved and loving. Because Being is the source and end of love, our love can be experienced within my own being, even though she is no longer physically a part of my being-in-the-world. This love is not just a pattern of thoughts and feelings, but a *being-there* that is present in the midst of my life. It is both loss and presence. It is loss because my being-in-the-world is different without her physically sharing in it through her own being-in-the-world. Yet, it is also presence because that love is not dead; it is fully *alive*, giving and receiving within me as if she were still here. How is this possible? It is through the ontological connection between love and being, it is because love is at the heart of Being, that our love is conserved. I can still encounter her love in and through Being because *Being is at the heart of all love*. It is this that allows me to transcend my grief and discover new meaning in my life without throwing away our love.

p. sacrifice

We have, so far, only briefly alluded to the idea of sacrifice in connection with love, and it will suit us well to bring it more to light as we draw near to the conclusion of this chapter. A sacrifice is an offering of ourselves, or at least a part of ourselves, to others in relationship as a gift. Furthermore, a sacrifice requests no compensation and is given freely. It is in the nature of love to sacrifice for the other to bring about their well-being. Consider, for

example, a priest who is awoken late at night by an emergency phone call. He makes himself available to his parishioners so that they can reach him even at odd hours. On this particular night, he pulls himself out of a comfortable bed so that he may drive to the hospital to be with a dying woman and give her the anointing of the sick. He sacrifices his sleep, his time, and his comfort for this woman to bring her peace and companionship in her final moments, while not asking for anything in return.

Why does he do this? He affirms her existence to the very end so that she may not be abandoned in the final moments of her life. He does so because he believes that life is good, and it is his act of love that demonstrates this belief. He does not seek to hold himself up as an idol in her heart, he seeks only to bring her comfort. Love seeks the well-being of the other. This is what we mean by the third quality of love. "I am here *for* you" means that I am here to bring the fullness of life to you even at a cost to myself. Love is offered in this way because of its nature. It is directed outward towards others, and as we have seen, it ultimately seeks the affirmation and well-being of all. Furthermore, because love comes from the heart of Being and is an affirmation proceeding from existence itself, it does not have limits placed upon it. Love goes beyond all appearances, beyond all self-concern, and seeks to enhance the goodness in the life of the other.

At the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned the example of St. Maximilan Kolbe.[37] We will now use this example in the context of his sacrifice to show the ultimatum that it gives. Love proclaims that life is good and that, because it is good, it must continue, even at the expense of my own life. This is the ultimatum that love, through sacrifice, gives to existence: "If I must, I will give everything I have, even life itself, so that your life may be worthwhile." St. Maximilian Kolbe gave his life so that the life of

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[37] St. Maximilian Kolbe offered himself as a replacement for a married man with children who was chosen to be starved to death in a chamber with nine other prisoners at Auschwitz. "Biography of Saint Maximilian Kolbe," St. Maximilian Kolbe Church, accessed August 16, 2024, https://www.stmaximiliankolbechurch.com/about-us/biography-of-saint-maximilian

another could go on. It was an affirmation of existence. It said, "life must continue because it is good, true, and beautiful, and I will give my life so that you may experience the goodness, truth, and beauty of life."

There can be no question here of his sacrificing himself so that he would become a hero for others. If he is a hero in the eyes of others, it is because he demonstrated the heights of love as self-giving and not because love is self-seeking. In other words, it is his witness to the goodness of Being through an act of love that justifies the sacrifice by transcending himself to reach something greater than himself. Although a cynic could describe this same action as a selfish attempt to elongate or enhance his memory in the eyes of others, we are seeking to describe a sacrifice of true love to get to the meaning of such an action. The end of St. Maximilian's action was to protect the life of another, and by doing this, he proclaimed the truth, beauty, and goodness inherent in existence. The reason he is honored in our memories is that he was a witness to love and life and not because he was a witness to himself.

We recognize a certain beauty in acts of love that can bring those who witness it to tears. It is no wonder that, when we remember someone whom we love who has passed away, we may cry. We remember their goodness, their presence, and how they brought love into our lives. What makes love beautiful is its affirmation of existence. Because it claims that life is good, it brings beauty into life. To return to our example, there must be beauty mixed with sorrow in the memory of the one who survived because of the sacrifice of Fr. Kolbe. His action was beautiful because it was a display of the goodness of the human person, both in the giving and receiving of life, yet it is also sorrowful because of the cost of human life.

Just as life can find its origin in conception through the mutual love of sexual intimacy, so can life find its fulfillment in the love of sacrificing itself for another. What makes sacrifice a superior form of love, however, is that nothing is gained in return. In sexual intimacy, each lover fully and necessarily receives the gift of the other. In a sacrifice of love, however, there is no compensation

necessary for the act. Sacrificial love demands nothing in return. It is a freely offered gift of the affirmation of the life of the other, and this is what enhances the beauty of the act. The mutual gift and reception of spouses in a marriage is beautiful. But because we are drawn to beauty through its goodness, we recognize that someone who sacrifices themselves for others, without the expectation of anything in return, is a higher good. We have seen that the authentic affirmation of others demands nothing from them. Therefore, sacrificial love is the most beautiful form of love since it is most demonstrable of the nature of love – to give of oneself without asking anything in return.

Through the perception of beauty found in a loving sacrifice, we can also rediscover Being as the source and end of love. Love rises out of Being and fades back into Being. How can we say this? From the perspective of the lover, the one who is sacrificing himself for others, his action does not just end in the world of the phenomena. It transcends the phenomena to reach Being through its attestation that "existence is good" and "life is worthwhile." This is the language of sacrificial love. He gives himself to others on their behalf so that they may attain a fuller existence. St. Maximilian reached out in his being to embrace Being through his love. It is neither ironic nor surprising that he would find the fullness of his existence at the moment of his death since love finds its end in Being.[38]

The lover who sacrifices himself reaches out toward Being. This is what attracts him toward sacrifice. It is not so that he may become a hero or an idol in the eyes of others, for then love would simply become a form of vanity on the level of being-for-others, which we have seen it cannot be. Rather, it is an intuition of the

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[38] Concerning this same topic, Marcel states that, "the person who is carrying the act out has, without any doubt at all, the feeling that through self-sacrifice he is reaching self-fulfillment; given his own situation and that of everything dear to him, he realizes his own nature most completely, he most completely *is*, in the act of giving his life away." Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume 1: Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1950), 166.

beauty of a loving sacrifice that attracts the lover to give of himself as the fulfillment of his being-with-others. Because the end of love is Being and affirms the goodness of existence, it is beautiful, and because it is beautiful it attracts the lover. The lover inherently perceives the beauty of love not in appearances but in Being, and it is this which makes the sacrifice of love attractive. The reason why sacrificial love has the capacity to give us joy is precisely because love fulfills our being.

Further, from the perspective of the beloved, the one who is sacrificed for, Being is revealed as the source of love. The beauty that the beloved receives through an act of love surpasses all phenomena. The beauty of love is not found in the appearance of the action, but in Being and in the person behind the action. The beloved perceives the sacrifice as beautiful for the same reason as the lover, namely, that it reveals the goodness of existence itself. The difference is that, since the beloved is on the receptive end of the action, she discovers Being as *the source* of love. The ontological origin of the sacrifice transcends the particular moment since it also transcends the particular action itself as appearance.

The beauty of love surpasses the perceiver-perceived dyad to reach Being because love is the fulfillment of our being-with-others. The origin of love is Being, which embraces the beloved through the sacrifice of the lover, and this is what makes the sacrifice beautiful in the eyes of the beloved. In sacrifice, the goodness of existence is proclaimed. The beauty we find in the natural world of the phenomena points over its shoulder to a transcendent Being, to be sure, but the beauty of love has already gone beyond the phenomenon to reach the heart of Being. It is not the appearance, not the action itself that matters, but the affirmation of the life of the beloved from the being of the lover, and ultimately, from the center of existence itself. Love opens up human reality, through both giving and receiving, to all of existence, and reaches Being itself as its source and end, like two opened windows, opposite one another, that allow the flow of air through a stale house.

q. what is love?

We are, at last, in a position to adequately answer the question which we set about to investigate at the beginning of this chapter: What is love? We must answer that love is the fulfillment of our being-with-others in a subject-subject relationship whereby the subject-being of the other is affirmed in my subject-being and vice versa. In this manner, love recognizes that existence is not a special privilege that must be earned. Rather, love embraces all life, no matter the circumstances, as a gift received, not as a right to be obtained. Love welcomes all life into existence, without reproach or harm. There does not always have to be any outward display of love for it to be present since it is not primarily concerned with appearances, although authentic love will find ways to express itself in and through the active body in-the-world.

Love is a battle against the everydayness and forgetfulness of life. Sometimes it registers within our interior life as an aching, a longing, a peaceful calm, a sorrow, a venturing into the unknown, a profound sense of meaningfulness, a clarity of mind, a sense that life is saturated by beauty and worth, and a sense that our hearts are being wounded and split open. Indeed, we have discovered that love is a wound. It is a wound because it is an opening at the core of my being that makes me vulnerable to another whom I desire to be united with. This union becomes a real ontological need, and its absence is felt profoundly in grief. In order to love, one must allow oneself to be cut to the heart and risk the pain of losing the other through life circumstances or death. In this sense, love makes us weak instead of self-reliant, but this weakness becomes the fulfillment of our being. It is the intertwining of two lives, brought together through their mutual wounds at the core of their beings. That is why separation and death are so painful. That is why it feels like one's heart is being ripped out in a time of grief. Indeed, a part of their life, a part of their being, *has* been ripped out, and all that is left is the open, sore, and bleeding wound of love.

Love causes our hearts to drip with an intensity of life that is at once sorrowfully earthly in its awareness of the transitoriness of life and yet filled with eternal significance that will be saved forever

in the Heart of Being. It is a faith that, although our love may be lost in the forgetfulness or everydayness of life, it is imprinted in eternity, where it will never be lost but will come to fulfillment. Love is the exact opposite of being lost in the everydayness of life with our focus on the small insignificances that take up most of our time and energy. Instead, it drenches our being with the light dew of the sacredness and beauty of life.

To love and to be are coterminous. To exist as a human being means to love and be loved. The more we love and are loved, the more we *are* in the sense of the fullness of being who we are. Lack of loving and being loved diminishes our being, but the opposite fulfills our being. We exist our love for the other by the ontological mode of being-with-them through an affirmation of their existence as opposed to being-against-them in the conflict of a subject-object relationship through hatred or indifference. As we have seen, conflict, in this sense, does not necessarily mean disagreement as a disagreement can be held in our being-with-others as loving concern for them. Rather, conflict, in its current usage, means treating or using the other as an object for our own gain or rejecting their existence as a person.

During our investigation, we noted that the joy and beauty that come from loving and being loved reveal Being as the source and end of love. We have seen that love does not occur in just the intellect, the will, the emotions, or the body, but that it is the meaning and fulfillment of an aspect of our being, namely, our being-with-others. Love opens up an entirely new dimension of being in the heart of our being, and it can only do this because it is ontologically connected with Being itself. This is the key discovery that will aid us in investigating further the meaning of human existence. It is this connection that we will delve into in our next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE - THE TRINITY

In the last chapter, we discovered that love is the essence and fullness of the meaning of our being-with-others. Being was further revealed to us as the source and end of love through an analysis of the nature of love and the joy and beauty given to the lover and the beloved in love. We must now turn our attention to exploring the ontological connection between Being and love, which we saw developing in the previous chapter. In particular, we must answer the question: what do we mean when we say that Being is the source and end of love? To clarify this question, and because the nature of Being is difficult to comprehend, we ought to begin with a brief review of how love is united with the being of the human person to refresh ourselves with the insights that may help us understand the connection between Being and love in general.

There is a curious phrase in the English language that we call "being in love". It is equally curious that we do not have comparable phrases such as "being in hatred", "being in joy", or "being in indifference". Likewise, we say "I *am* in love", but we do not say "I am in hatred" or "I am in joy". Of course, just because there is a phrase for something does not mean that it corresponds with an ontological reality since words and phrases can easily pass in and out of usage. However, we may still investigate the phrase "being in love" to find out if it adequately expresses the connection between being and love in the human person, and if so, how it can inform our understanding of this connection.

a. love, being, and the human person

What is the nature of being in love? We are expressing a state of being as opposed to a state of mind or emotional state. To be in love is to exist my love just as I exist my being-with-others. When I first fall in love, my whole life begins to orient around the one whom I love. I think about her, I dream about her, I sacrifice for her, I spend time with her, I talk to her, I go places with her, I buy gifts for her, etc. But all of these things are outward signs of an

internal reality. So, we must ask, how does being in love affect me in my being? What does it mean to exist my love for her? I become my love for her. In a sense, I am my love for her. We must call to mind that my love for her is not separate from my being since love makes up the essence of my being-with-others. She becomes the center of my being-with-others through love, not as an idol-object, but as a subject-person in a subject-subject relationship that respects the dignity of both persons. In this way, my love for her is united to my being, and I am inseparable from this love. This deeper reality manifests itself in the time I spend with her. As the relationship deepens, we are no longer individuals but a couple. We identify with each other in our being and others begin to identify us with each other. We are fused in our being through our love. Not in the sense that we lose our individual subjectivities, but in the sense that, in our subjective being, we are united to each other through love. Love unites being to being through the ontological reality of our being-with-others.

This is the ontological reality that the phrase "being in love" is meant to express. It is a union of her being with my being, on the ontological level of our being-with-each-other, that affects me in my being. This is because love is the essence of being-with-others, and so it is love that unites us in our being. Therefore, I cannot be separated from my love as it forms a part of my being. Furthermore, if love establishes an ontological connection between beings, we must note that it cannot make this connection merely on the level of the phenomena. Again, we see that love passes beyond the phenomena. The only way that love can make an ontological connection between beings is if it comes from Being itself, as we saw in the previous chapter. Only Being can provide the means for love to unite persons in their being as the essence of our being-with-others. It cannot come from consciousness, since consciousness is simple subjective awareness. It cannot come from phenomena since it passes beyond the phenomena. Additionally, the same cannot be said of hatred or indifference. Since these relations with others are in the mode of being-for-others (which is ontologically secondary to, and can only exist in the background of, an already establish being-

with-others), they cannot form the essence of my relationship with them. It is a break in that relationship. Therefore, we once again find that love, as opposed to hatred or indifference, goes to the heart of Being as its source and end.

Now that we have briefly reviewed the connection between being and love within the human person, we must see if we can apply any of this discovery to our investigation into the ontological connection between Being and love. We have already discovered that Being is the source and end of love and that love finds its origin and its terminus in Being. Love is at the very heart of Being. If love comes from the heart of Being, then how does this change our understanding of Being? First of all, we know that love is only possible in persons because only persons can give of themselves to others. If love stems from Being, then we must question if Being is aware as a Person, and if so, we must also question how we are to understand this awareness. Additionally, if love is united with being in the human person, we must question if Being is ontologically united with love, and if so, we must also question how we are to understand this union. We will begin with the former questions and work towards the latter.

b. Being and subjectivity

Love requires subject-personhood. Inanimate objects are incapable of giving and receiving love because they do not have any awareness. Awareness, then, is a requirement for the ability to give and receive love. The reason for this requirement is that love requires the freedom inherent in personhood to give of oneself to the other and to receive the love of others. Therefore, Being, the source and end in the circuit of love that we have described, must be a Subject. Earlier, we stated that Being cannot be an object for consciousness. Now perhaps we have a reason why. Being is a Subject and not a phenomenon that can be grasped as an intentional object. Furthermore, as a Subject, Being must be aware through its Personhood. It now remains for us to elucidate this awareness, as far as we are capable with human understanding.

First, we must acknowledge that this awareness is different in nature than human consciousness. One of the main reasons for this is that the awareness of Being is infinite and not confined to a particular vantage point as in human persons. Furthermore, and related to this last point, because Being is infinite truth, as we noted in chapter three, the awareness of Being must also be a knowledge and understanding of all truth. This is not the same as the human mind, which works through phenomena to apprehend particular truths, but it is an immediate grasp of *all* that is true, unrestricted by time and space. This awareness of Being is an immediate awareness of all truth without the separation that is found in the human understanding of particular truths between the knower and the known. This awareness *is* Truth because Being is the source and ground of all that is. This is why Aquinas states of God that, "His existence is His act of understanding."[1] All things are ontologically grounded in Being, therefore, Being is aware of the truth of all things with immediacy. For this reason, we will continue using the word "awareness" to describe the subjectivity of Being rather than "consciousness" in an attempt to delineate the difference between the two.

We have concluded, then, that Being is aware, it is *living*, it is subject. However, Being also cannot be divided in its essence.[2] It cannot be composed of individual parts because Being is a unity whose form is itself, as we saw in chapter three. Because Being is Being through and through, and is the foundation of all other existents, it cannot be subdivided any further in its essence and it is not limited by any finite form. It does not have any components and is not a compound. Being is pure existence, and its essence must remain one. Therefore, we cannot add awareness to the essence of

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[1] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 2nd ed (Available at http://newadvent.org/summa, 2017), I.14.5.

[2] Concerning the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity, for example, Aquinas states that, "in God the essence is taken as the form of the three persons." Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.39.2. There is no division of essence in the three persons of the Trinity according to Christianity. We will still have reason to see why this is important.

Being. Rather, Being must remain the essence of its awareness. We will use the term "Awareness-as-Being" to describe this Personhood of Being. We are to mean by this that Awareness-as-Being, *in its essence*, is indistinguishable from Being-as-Being. Both Awareness[3] and Being have the same essence, which is Being. However, they are still distinguishable *in their relation* to one another, which remains to be described.

The reason why we developed this notion of Awareness is that Being was found as the source and end of love. Just as being and love are united in the human person through the essence of our being-with-others, so Being is ontologically united to love in its essence. This is because Being, as a Person, is inseparable from the love which proceeds from it. Just as love makes up a part of the being of the human person as the essence of our being-with-others, so the love that issues from the heart of Being, as a Person, must make up "a part" of Being, recognizing also that Being does not contain separated parts. Being, as a Person, must share its essence with the love that emanates from it as a being-with. Love, as we have seen, is shared between persons and makes up the essence of that relationship with-others that is a part of the being of persons. But Being, as we mentioned earlier, cannot be divided in its essence. So, if love makes up an essential "part" of Being, as the essence of its relations with persons (as a being-with), then love must also have the identical essence of Being.

The reason for this shared essence between Being and love is because Being's essence cannot be divided. If love shares the essence of Being, in its being-with-others, then love must share in Being itself. We will use the term "Love-as-Being" to describe this relation found in Being. But now we have come to another difficulty. Who are the persons that share Love?[4] Only Being can be co-eternal with itself in such a way as to maintain a relationship

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[3] Throughout the rest of this book, we will frequently use the term "Awareness" to refer to Awareness-as-Being.

[4] Throughout the rest of this book, we will frequently use the term "Love" to refer to Love-as-Being.

of love between Persons. The Persons who give and receive Love in this relationship cannot be finite. If one was infinite and the other was finite, the interior relationship of Love within Being could not exist. No relation found within Being can be finite since its essence is existence without the limits of time, space, or form. If Love, therefore, is ontologically connected to Being in its essence, then it must be shared co-eternally within Being-itself. Furthermore, if Love shares in the essence of Being it can only be because there are Persons with an interior relation between themselves within Being-itself, and these Persons must be Being and Awareness.

We have concluded, then, that there must be at least two Persons within Being between which Love can flow and that these Persons are Being and Awareness. Certainly, Awareness is a Person since it has a living subjectivity in its nature. However, how can we say that Being is also a Person? Since Being and Awareness share the same essence, which is Being, then they also share in each other's nature. They are united in essence, and so, they participate in the life of the other as *a communion of Persons*. According to Stein, "[the Trinity] is an eternal movement within the self, an eternal self-drawing or self-creating out of the depth of God's own infinite being, an infinitely generous giving of the eternal I to an eternal Thou, and a correspondingly eternal and ever-renewed self-receiving and self-giving."[5] In marriage, for instance, we see two persons come together to share each other's life. However, they remain divided in their essence as individual persons. Within the inner life of Being, on the other hand, Being and Awareness are united even in their essence. In theology, this is referred to as *mutual indwelling*. That is to say, because they share the same essence, Being dwells within Awareness and Awareness dwells within Being. The Being of Being-as-Being and the Awareness of Awareness-as-Being cannot be separated from each other in their natures but only in their relation to one another. Therefore, Being is also a Person. Being and Awareness are only distinguished by their relation to each other as Persons, which we still have yet to explain. Being shares in the

[5] Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 351.

Awareness of Awareness, and Awareness shares in the Being of Being. They are one by essence. They cannot be separated in such a way that they become separate beings like the asexual reproduction of single-celled organisms. They are only "split" from each other in the sense that they are a relation of Persons within the same essence.

c. Being and love

What is this relation which distinguishes them as Persons yet does not divide them in essence? It is Love. Love-as-Being, which also shares in the essence of Being, "separates" the Personhood of Being and Awareness while maintaining their shared essence. It is the Love that Awareness is for Being and that Being is for Awareness that gives them separate relations with each other. Now, since Love also participates in Being, we have come to discover a third Person within Being, which also has a relation with the other two Persons. This is because Love too must share in the same essence as Awareness and Being since it is part of the communion found within the essence of Being. Love also is part of this mutual indwelling. Love is ontologically convertible with Being. Love dwells within Awareness and within Being. Awareness dwells within Love and within Being. Being dwells within Love and within Awareness. We see that Love, then, both unites and divides Being in a paradoxical manner. It "splits" Being into three Persons, yet preserves their one essence. We are talking about Being-as-Being-as-Love-as-Awareness all as one Being, one essence. Awareness, Being, and Love all share in each other's nature, but remain distinct from each other in relation. Our next task is to explicate their internal relations.

The internal relations that we have discovered within Being-itself can only be ontological since we are dealing with pure existence. The relations of Being to Awareness and Being to Love are of ontological primacy. By stating that Being is the ontologically primary Person, we mean to say that both Awareness and Love find their ontological origin within Being-as-Being. This is simply because Being-as-Being remains the essence of the other two Persons. This is how Being is related to Awareness and Love – it is

ontologically primary to them both. It only remains for us now to explicate the ontological relation between Awareness and Love. By now, it should be clear to us that Awareness is the ontologically secondary Person and that Love is the ontologically tertiary Person. This is because love is ontologically dependent upon personhood, and personhood requires both awareness and being. Utilizing terms from theology, we can say that Awareness is "begotten" from Being within itself as a separate relation and that Love is "spirated" from both Awareness and Being as a third relation. Aquinas states that,

> There are two processions in God; the procession of the Word, and another. In evidence whereof we must observe that procession exists in God, only according to an action which does not tend to anything external, but remains in the agent itself. Such an action in an intellectual nature is that of the intellect, and of the will. The procession of the Word is by way of an intelligible operation. The operation of the will within ourselves involves also another procession, that of love, whereby the object loved is in the lover; as, by the conception of the word, the object spoken of or understood is in the intelligent agent. Hence, besides the procession of the Word in God, there exists in Him another procession called the procession of love.[6]

Aquinas, here, uses the terminology of "Word", in accordance with Biblical tradition, whereas we are using the terminology of "Awareness". Furthermore, Aquinas approaches the processions of the Trinity from the starting point of the rational faculties of knowing and willing, whereas we are approaching the processions of the Trinity from the starting point of love as the essence of being-with-others through the awareness of personhood.

Although our terminology and starting point differ from Aquinas, we agree with his understanding of the Trinity. We will sometimes adopt the traditional terminology for the Trinity, but for

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[6] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.27.3.

now, we are using the terminology of our approach to build up our understanding until we are ready to switch to the traditional terminology. For our purposes, then, we will state that Love flows, or proceeds, both from Being and Awareness as their ontological affirmation of each other. Of course, we must keep in mind that all three Persons are co-eternal since they all share the same essence of Being. These relations between the three Persons are eternally present within Being itself without altering the purity and unity of the essence of Being in any way. We have established three Persons in one Being, separated not in essence, but only in their ontological relation to one another.

d. the Trinity

By now, it is clear that what we have been explaining is the Christian notion of the Trinity – three Persons in one God. To repeat, the difference is that we have utilized different terminology and a different method of approach. However, it will now be beneficial for us to adopt the Christian terminology of the Trinity to avoid confusion. Namely, we should understand Being-as-Being as the Father, Awareness-as-Being as the Son (or the Word), and Love-as-Being as the Holy Spirit. We have come to see that the Trinity is primarily a communion of Persons that are in a co-eternal relationship with one another.[7] Additionally, God, in the Christian tradition, is thought of as omnipresent, omnipotent, benevolent, and omniscient. Our current ontological method of approach to the Trinity should assist us in understanding how these concepts are to be understood.

To begin, *omnipresence* is found in God because God is Being. Since Being is the ontological foundation for all existents,

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[7] We should note that the Persons of the Son (Awareness) and the Holy Spirit (Love) are necessary and not contingent Persons. That is to say, they exist not by the creation of the Father (Being), but by the very nature of the Personhood of Being, as we have seen. Furthermore, there are three and only three Persons in the Trinity because only Love and Awareness are non-phenomenal aspects of a Person, and of course, Being is not a phenomenon.

God is discoverable in all existents as their ontological foundation. Furthermore, since God is aware as a Person,[8] He is present to us (as persons) in the particular way that a Person is present as opposed to how an object is present. In other words, we encounter Him person-to-Person in a subject-Subject relationship rather than a subject-object relationship. This is because of the subjectivity of personhood which is not found in inanimate objects. Furthermore, because of the Awareness of God, He is *omniscient*, as we previously noted, since Being is the infinite source of all truth. We noted that He is Truth. He is present as the ontological foundation of all things, and He knows all things in Himself. Lastly, God is *omnipotent* for the same reason, namely, He ontologically establishes all existents. Nothing can exist without God willing it.[9]

Now we are in the position to understand the solution to an issue that we discovered in our analysis of the phenomena. What makes phenomena so consistent? What gives them the unity of a form in a particular, finite substance? Why is it that I can wake up, leave my apartment, and then return to it later to find the same furniture in the same place and everything in the same state that I left it in? Let us state the problem differently. If phenomena exist only as appearances, what makes it possible to re-experience them at a different point in time? And, if we say that it is the substance, what is it that keeps the substance in existence? We may call to mind here our discussion in chapter three regarding the *esse* of finite beings. Earlier, we have said that it is Being which maintains the being of a particular existent, even when it is not perceived, and which maintains the act of being of a substance. Therefore, Being allows existents to be re-perceivable as phenomena and provides the ontological foundation for all substances. At that time, however, we

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[8] When using the term "God" to speak of the Trinity we will also use the singular "Person" for the sake of grammatical uniformity.

[9] We must understand here that God's Will is different from the human will since it is a single Act that is inseparable from His Being. It is not extended through time as a human will is, nor is it changeable. His Will is perfect Love-of-Goodness, just as His Intellect is perfect Understanding-of-Truth. That is to say, His Will (Love-as-Being) is Love and His Intellect (Awareness-as-Being) is Truth.

still wondered how this was possible. Was it through creation? Now, however, since we have discovered Personhood in Being, we find that it is God Himself who keeps existents in existence. We can, then, think in terms of creation. Since God is the ontological foundation of all existents, He is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent as the Creator of all things. He knows, creates, and sustains their existence through the Understanding of His Awareness and the Will of His Love.

e. arguments against the existence of God

But we must also ask if this view is problematic. To begin with, we must recall that, in chapter three, we said that consciousness of nothingness is nothingness. We also said that Being cannot be an object for consciousness because it is not a phenomenon. If both of these statements are true, then how can Awareness have an eternal object for itself before the creation of the universe? The answer to this difficulty lies in the fact that the Trinity is not an isolated person, but a communion of Persons. For an individual, isolated consciousness, there would be nothing to grasp onto prior to creation. Therefore, it would fall away into nothingness or have need of an eternal universe. However, in the Trinity, three co-eternal Persons are the co-eternal Awareness of each other's Presence and Love as a Being-With at the heart of their Being. Additionally, an isolated consciousness has no relations inside of itself to ontologically found itself. Thetic and non-thetic consciousness are not internal relations of consciousness, rather they constitute different aspects of the same plenum of awareness, as we have seen. Therefore, consciousness cannot support its own being. In the Trinity, however, there are three internal relations of Persons that are also ontologically self-sufficient due to their essence as Being. Awareness does not require a phenomenon because it is ontologically self-sufficient. Furthermore, because each Person of the Trinity is infinite Being in its essence, they are capable of the full Awareness of the full Presence and Love of the other Persons as an internal relation of Persons within the same essence. The Trinity is

primarily a Being-with in this communion of Persons. Hence, it is the fact that the Trinity is a communion of co-eternal Persons, whose essence is Being, that allows them to be ontologically prior to the creation of the universe.

But that is not the only difficulty that we must face. For instance, it was Sartre's main criticism of God that He cannot be both being-in-itself and being-for-itself (i.e. consciousness) since such a union is impossible.[10] Being-in-itself, according to Sartre, cannot contain the subjectivity of the for-itself within itself because subjectivity requires the nothingness of consciousness. Being-in-itself cannot have any nothingness within it since it is pure, solid being. There is no room for nothingness within the confines of being-in-itself, as we admitted in chapter three. Furthermore, even if God is a subjectivity, then we cannot be free or separate from God, since we would exist only as ideas in His mind. However, this contradicts the freedom which is my consciousness and which I am. Therefore, God as Awareness cannot exist, and the view that we have outlined above becomes moot.[11] This is the second argument against

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[10] He states, for instance, that, "what the for-itself demands of the in-itself is precisely the totality detotalized – 'in-itself nihilated in for-itself.' . . . It is as the nihilation of the in-itself and a perpetual evasion of contingency and of facticity that it wishes to be its own foundation. . . The fundamental value which presides over this project is exactly the in-itself-for-itself; that is, the ideal of a consciousness which would be the foundation of its own being-in-itself by the pure consciousness it would have of itself. It is this ideal which can be called God." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 723-724. Sartre continues by saying that man strives to become God by becoming in-itself. However, he ends his book stating, "man loses himself as man in order that God may be born. But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 784. This is precisely because he views the for-itself as a nothingness that is incompatible with the in-itself. Since it must nihilate the in-itself to exist, the for-itself is incompatible with the in-itself.

[11] Sartre states, "if the act of creation is to be continued indefinitely, if the created being is to be supported even in its inmost parts, if it does not have its own independence, if it is *in itself* only nothingness – then the creature is no way distinguished from its creator; it is absorbed in him; we are dealing with a false transcendence, and the creator can not have even an illusion of getting out of his subjectivity." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 19-20. To respond, we must articulate a viewpoint such that my freedom can be retained while my being is sustained by God.

God's existence that we will examine.

Let us begin with the first argument. Sartre's first argument relies on two premises that we do not accept. In chapter two, for instance, we dispatched with the notion of consciousness as a nothingness. Consciousness most definitely is something because it has the act of being. We analyzed consciousness as an existent and found no nothingness within it. Instead, we determined that it was a plenum of awareness, and that human awareness has being. But *even if* we admitted that consciousness is a nothingness, Sartre's argument assumes that God's Awareness is comparable to human consciousness. But we cannot accept this premise either. Since God's essence is Being-itself, we cannot think that His Awareness, in any way other than subject-Personhood, resembles human consciousness. We know that God has Personhood through Awareness because of the analysis of love in the previous chapter of this work. However, this does not mean that His Awareness is similar to our consciousness that we know through self-reflection. We cannot reach the level of fullness of understanding of God's Awareness since we must approach our understanding of awareness from the human perspective.

Our essence, as humans, is finite and limited as we have seen, whereas God's is infinite. Our consciousness is contingent, His Awareness is self-sufficient. We are one being among many similar beings. God, however, is Being-itself. We cannot presume to understand His subjectivity as Awareness as analogous to human subjectivity. Sartre's second error, then, is to make this very presumption that God's subjectivity must be the same in nature as human subjectivity – which is, for him, to say it must be a nothingness. However, since God's essence is drastically different from the essence of a human being, His Awareness must remain outside of the realm of our reflective analysis of consciousness, and therefore, outside the realm of our full understanding of its nature. All we can say is that God has Awareness as a subject-Person. Beyond that, we can know nothing about what it is like to be this Awareness. Furthermore, Awareness does not require a phenomenon and is ontologically independent, which was stated earlier in this

section. For this reason, it cannot be a nothingness. It follows that the criticism that Awareness and Being are ontologically incompatible loses its thrust. First, this is because Awareness is not a nothingness, and second, because we cannot analogize this Awareness to human consciousness since it is different in its very essence.

Now we must examine the second argument against God's existence, namely that, if God is a subject, then we are simply ideas in His mind and have no independent freedom or existence. If this were true, then we would become pure objects for God and lose our subjective personhood. But again, this argument assumes that God has a mind that works analogously to the human mind. We have understood the mind to be that which consciousness inhabits with the faculties inherent in it (such as understanding, reason, imagination, memory, etc.), and which is united to the body through the soul. When we conceive of an idea in our minds, it has no freedom of its own, and we can manipulate it in any way that we desire. However, there is no reason for us to believe that God's conception of us in His mind is analogous to this. This is because God is pure Being and is the ontological foundation of all that exists. His mind is the full knowledge of all that is true in one act of apprehension that is not distinct from His essence as Awareness. As we have seen, God's omniscience comes from this fact. He knows by His very essence. God, as Being, already understands and is aware of all that exists without the need for an intermediate mind with faculties such as humans have. We must not, therefore, think of God as having a mind that is analogous to a human mind. He is not extended through space and time but is separate from all phenomena.

Furthermore, *even if* we admitted that God's mind is analogous to the human mind, we must further inquire about how we exist in relation to God. Are we just objects that are drowned in the subjectivity of God's Awareness? How can we claim independent existence or freedom as subjects of our own? It should be clear to us from our prior discoveries that there is an ontological distinction between a particular finite being, such as a human person, and God. This distinction is at the level of being and is enough to separate us

from God as individual persons because He gives us our own *esse*. Unlike human beings, God can give the act of being to existents because He is Being. Humans cannot bring things into existence *ex nihilo* since we are finite creatures that can only manipulate pre-existing entities. However, God, whose essence is *esse*, can give *esse* to other things. He can give what primarily belongs to Him (i.e. the act of being) just as a finite creature can pass along their finite form to their offspring through the act of procreation.

God is Being and is therefore the ontological ground upon which we must exist. That is certain. However, just as a tree that is rooted in, and dependent on, the ground has its own existence separate from the ground, so a human person has a separate existence from God while still having God as the ground of their existence. We cannot doubt that we depend upon God for our existence, but our individual nature comes from the fact that we are a finite being-as-human. *We are distinct from God in our essence* because our essence is as a finite subject-person, *and this essence includes our freedom*, as we saw in chapter two. Ontologically speaking, my being comes from God, since He gives me my *esse*, but in my being, I am a particular being with a distinct essence and my own act of being.

The reality of this is clarified when we consider that we can have a subject-subject relationship with God and each other. The love that flows from person to person and from person to God establishes individual subjectivity outside of a mere object of God's Awareness. For instance, even though I am aware of others and have knowledge about them, they remain distinct from me in their essence. Similarly, God can know us while still maintaining our individual personhood. Just as Love "divides" the Trinity into three relations of Persons, it is Love that separates us from God as individual persons with our own acts of being. The difference is that, in the Trinity, they share one essence by their nature, but in our humanity, we have separate essences as human beings. Additionally, this essence contains our freedom so that we too can give and receive love. God's Love for us separates us from Himself as individual persons like a mother who gives life to a child in her

womb through conception. *His love carves out an ontological space* from His Being to found our finite being-as-person. It is through the creative Love of God that our independent existence is established, but the human mind can go no further in understanding this process.

f. God's benevolence

We have come to explain how the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of God are related to His essence as Being. But it is His Love that allows us to understand the benevolence of God. St. John tells us that, "God is Love."[12] The mystery of the Trinity is wrapped up in this statement because it implies a relationship within God that is both a unity and a distinction. We have seen this in our discussion on the three persons of the Trinity. God loves His creation and all persons whom He has created for this same reason. It is God's essence to Love, to want what is best for us, and to give Himself to us because He is Love. Our existence as individual subjects who are capable of giving and receiving love in a relationship with God and with others is further ontological evidence of God's benevolence. This is because it is only through Love that God can establish us as subjects separate from Himself who can give and receive love. It is an ontological truth that God loves us into existence, but it remains incomprehensible to us how this works on a metaphysical level.

Indeed, it was Kant's criticism of theology that, since we can only attain knowledge of existents through our experience of phenomena, and since God is not a phenomenon, we can never experience God. Therefore, everything about Him is unknowable.[13] However, we have seen that our experience transcends the level of

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[12] 1 John 4:8 (RSV)

[13] Kant says, "The transcendental idea of a necessary and all-sufficient original Being is so overwhelming, so high above everything empirical, which is always conditioned, that we can never find in experience enough material to fill such a concept, and can only grope about among things conditioned, looking in vain for the unconditioned, of which no rule of any empirical synthesis can ever give us an example, or even show the way towards it." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 224.

phenomena. In doing so, we do not reach a *hidden* reality that phenomena obscure, rather, we reach a *fuller* reality that phenomena point to "over their shoulder" as it were. In chapter one, for example, we mentioned that there is an ontological structure to the world that we perceive and that we can know the essences of objects. Being-in-itself is also given in human experience, as we saw in chapter three, and love reaches us on the level of existence through our being-with-others, as we noted in chapter four. It is this which establishes our subject-subject relations with them.

Therefore, our experience, through love, surpasses the level of phenomena and reaches Being as the origin and end of love. It is on the level of our inter-relational being-with, and not on the level of phenomena, that we can experience God, not as a feeling, but as a *Presence of Love*. This means that we can know God through being, in being, and by being. We can have *experiences of the transcendent*.[14] To encounter a person on the level of being, rather than the level of phenomena, means that they form a part of our being on the ontological level as a relationship with another subjective being. A subject-subject relationship must be ontological, and not merely phenomenological because, on the level of phenomena, we cannot surpass the subject-object dyad. It is only through love that such a relationship can be established in the being of the persons involved.

Once, therefore, we have established the Trinity through our inquiry into the connection of being and love, we can realize a relationship with God in our being-as-person. God's Presence, then, is experienced as an encounter with Love-as-Being in a subject-Subject relationship with Being, which necessarily transcends phenomena. This makes it similar to our being-with-others through love. It is an affirmation of our existence from the Person of Being. It can, of course, also happen that there arise internal phenomena, such as feelings of peace, that make sensible God's Presence and

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[14] Marcel points out that, "not only does the word 'transcendent' *not* mean 'transcending experience', but on the contrary there must exist a possibility of having an experience *of* the transcendent as such, and unless that possibility exists the word can have no meaning." Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume 1*, 46.

Love, just as we may perceive the subject-person of the other through their body. Such experiences are personal encounters with Being and, as such, are incapable of being fully communicated to others and are matters of faith. They are experiences of the transcendent that occur on the level of subject-being and resonate in the phenomena of our minds and bodies.

Through our analysis, then, we have discovered that Awareness, Love, and Being are the ontological foundation upon which we exist, and we have come to understand this foundation as God. Our inquiry into the human experience and our investigation into the ontological connection between being and love has led us to the existence of the Trinity. We have discovered God, in the three Persons of the Trinity, as the basis of our existence. Now, we must turn to analyze further our relation to God.

Chapter Six - Our Relation to God

At the end of the last chapter, we stated that God is Love. However, when we observe the world around us, we find that it is full of pain and suffering. Furthermore, we stated that God holds all existents in existence, but some existents, such as viral infections, cause us harm and even death. The most convincing argument against God's existence, therefore, seems to be the suffering we find in human existence. If God loves us, why does He allow us to suffer when He can do something about it? We may recall Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, where Ivan expounds his view of God and suffering to Alyosha through horrific stories of suffering children. Ivan concludes,

> Listen: if all have to suffer so as to buy eternal harmony by their suffering, what have the children to do with it - tell me, please? It is entirely incomprehensible why they, too, should have to suffer and why they should have to buy harmony by their sufferings. Why should they, too, be used as dung for someone's future harmony?[1]

We may wonder, along with Ivan, why suffering assails humanity, even those who are innocent children, while seeming to give us little insight into truth.

Why is God so distant and unreachable in our suffering? Surely, if God loved us as much as we have been brought to think at this point in our investigation, He would not allow the atrocities of mankind to continue, not to mention biological and environmental problems that we see manifested in our world. Is it not true that God sustains the being of such atrocities? Does not the brokenness of the world testify to the non-existence of a loving God? Christiane, in Gabriel Marcel's play *The Broken World*, explains to Denise, "Don't you have the impression that we are living . . . if we can call that living . . . in a broken world? Yes, broken like a watch that has

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[1] Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 286.

stopped. Its mainspring no longer works. Everything is in place. But if you put the watch to your ear . . . you hear nothing."[2] When we reflect upon the loneliness, pain, and suffering in the world, it does indeed seem as though the heart of Love that once created the world has stopped beating. It is as though a loving maker has wound up the world, sent it forth, then died, allowing suffering and death to enter into a previously beautiful and orderly world, leaving us to fend for ourselves. Where does God's love go when we suffer? Why does it seem that He has abandoned us?

a. the traditional response to suffering

The traditional response of Christian believers to suffering is that our suffering is due to the fall of humanity into sin and away from God's grace. Humanity chose sin over God's Love, and so the metaphysical and actual consequences of our actions (i.e. the loss of God's protective grace) explain our suffering. The free choice to sin, they say, is the cause of all our suffering. Suffering is the punishment we create for ourselves by our sins, which distance us from God's Love. This traditional response is articulated most convincingly by C.S. Lewis in his book *The Problem of Pain*.[3] This explanation is true and satisfying to a certain degree, but it does not reach the depth of the problem. Although we may agree with the traditional response that sin leads to the loss of grace and opens us up to the realities of death and suffering, the amount and intensity of suffering that can be present in the human person demand a deeper

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[2] Marcel, Gabriel, *Gabriel Marcel's Perspectives on the Broken World: the Broken World, a Four-act Play: Followed By Concrete Approaches To Investigating the Ontological Mystery*, trans. Katharine Rose Hanley (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), 46.

[3] One brief instance of his insight regards the necessity of the possibility of suffering in a life where free choice is possible. He states, "Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself." Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 25. If God created human beings to be free, then suffering had to be possible as a result of sin. Otherwise, our actions would have no real consequences and our freedom would be lost.

explanation, especially when we consider instances similar to those outlined by Ivan to Alyosha, where the innocent are brutally punished for the sins of the guilty. The traditional response may make us feel like a lost man dying of thirst in the desert who is given a bottle of water from a passer-by with his wish for "good luck."

What we want to know is why do *I* suffer, why does *he* suffer, and why does *she* suffer. The traditional response gives us a broad, theoretical explanation for the presence of suffering in our world, but what we want to know is why particular individuals have to suffer in the particular existential way that they do. What is the *meaning*, if any, of *this* particular existential suffering in *this* particular person? Furthermore, we want to know how this suffering can ever be resolved into the harmony of eternal happiness. Indeed, at times, it seems impossible. For these reasons, the traditional response to the problem of suffering cannot fully satisfy us. It does not answer anything regarding *the meaning* of individual suffering, nor does it give us a way *to live* with that suffering.

This limitation of the traditional response does not mean that it is wrong. It simply means that it cannot address us at the individual level of our own existential suffering, where it matters most. We must admit that we cannot come to an intellectual explanation of any individual's particular suffering that will give us complete reassurance about the Love of God. This is because we are not dealing with a purely intellectual problem. The Love of God surpasses the intellect and reaches the heart of the person, the being of the person, as we have seen, in His relationship with us. The problem of suffering, then, reaches us at an ontological, existential level, because it directly challenges this Love. Does God really love *me*? Why does *she* have to suffer in this way? How is his suffering compatible with God's love *for him*? We may think, "perhaps God does not exist after all since we find many instances where His supposed Love is lacking, or worse, absent." Therefore, the problem of suffering does not need an intellectual response as much as it needs an existential solution that we can find within our hearts, within our own being. It is a response of trust that we must seek, and this is the role of faith in the night of doubt. We need to come to

peace, within ourselves, with the presence of suffering in our own lives, trusting in God's Love for us beyond what we can understand.

We will, therefore, set aside the traditional response of suffering since we will also be setting aside the general question, "why is there suffering?" The traditional response is a satisfactory theoretical response to this theoretical question. What we must examine, however, is a different question, an existential question: "why is there this particular suffering in this particular person?" We are not changing the initial question, rather, we are honing in on a particular problem that challenges us in our particular approach to understanding the human person. For this reason, the demeanor of our approach from this point forward will be less exacting and more personal.

But before we explore our question any further, we must also set another limit upon our inquiry. Since we are focused now on particular, existential suffering, and not suffering in an abstract, theoretical, or general sense, we can only examine the possibility of coming to peace with the suffering which we have personally experienced. We cannot examine the possibility of coming to peace with the suffering of others, on their behalf, as they may have experienced it. This simply lies outside of the realm of possibility. Each person can only search within themselves for their own inner peace to their own existential suffering. We can only come to terms with the presence or absence of God's Love in our own hearts based on our own experiences and our own search for His Love within our own being. The problem of suffering, as we are positing it, is an existential problem dealing with our own individual being which we each must respond to in our own unique way.

However, this is not to deny the fact that the suffering of others can affect us in our being and add to our doubts about God's love, especially when we share in their pain through a tight-knit subject-subject relationship. We do not mean to exclude this kind of suffering since it forms part of our experience on a personal level. It is good that the question, "why does *she* have to suffer through this?" arises in our hearts. But, the goodness of this question comes from the fact that we share a subject-subject relationship with the

person and not from the fact that we can use them as philosophical fodder for an argument against the existence of God. We share deeply in their humanity through love, and *it is love that allows the question to arise within us*. Without love of the other, the problem of suffering loses nearly all of its bite. But we also have to recognize that we must deal with the pain of these situations in our own hearts and that the other has to come to peace with their own suffering in their own way. Again, suffering is a deeply personal problem, and it can only be resolved within each person, individually, in the context of their relationship with God. In other words, the suffering that affects me, and reaches my being, will necessarily be different from the suffering that affects others and reaches their being, even though we may share in some of the same sufferings.

Therefore, it is important at the outset to recognize that God, as a Person, has a unique relationship with each of us, and so, we have to engage our suffering and our relationship with Him in our own person. We cannot do this on behalf of others, since they have their own personhood, their own sufferings, their own doubts, and their own relationship with God. We can only seek to come to peace with the suffering that we experience in our own internal being, even though we may wish that, because of our love for them, we could take their burden fully upon ourselves. Again, we are not excluding the impact that the suffering of others has on our being, especially those who are closest to us. We are only saying that it is up to each person to come to peace with their suffering, as it is experienced within their being.

With this understanding in place, we may proceed with more clarity about the questions that face us. We will look for a general road map of how we may find this inner peace and faith in God's love for us. Although we have acknowledged that each journey is different, some broad-reaching answers are available to all, and although each person's suffering is particular to them, there are some resolutions that everyone can participate in. The particulars about *how* they participate in them must be established at the personal, individual level. But it will be good for us to outline these general answers and the inner resolutions which we now seek. This will

allow us to have an overview of how we may come to peace with our suffering, which can then be used as a general guide to the terrain of the mystery of personal suffering and its meaning. Lastly, but most importantly, this search will bring us to a deeper understanding of our relationship with God and give us insight into how we can develop that relationship.

b. suffering speaks

Let us begin with insights from a Zen Buddhist monk on the role of mindfulness in coming to peace with our suffering. Thich Nhat Hanh states in his book, *No Mud, No Lotus*:

> The work of mindfulness is first to recognize the suffering and second to embrace it. A mother taking care of a crying baby naturally will take the child into her arms without suppressing, judging it, or ignoring the crying. Mindfulness is like that mother, recognizing and embracing suffering without judgment. So, the practice is not to fight or suppress the feeling, but rather to cradle it with a lot of tenderness . . . Once you have offered your acknowledgment and care to this suffering, it naturally will become less impenetrable and more workable; and then you have the chance to look into it deeply with kindness . . . and find out why it has come to you. It is trying to get your attention, to tell you something, and now you can take the opportunity to listen.[4]

What is suffering trying to tell us about our existential situation as a human person? What insights can we find when we become attentive to our suffering and listen to it? Again, each person will have an individual answer for their own particular suffering, but there are some lessons that we can speak of, in general, based upon our discoveries thus far in our investigation.

To begin, it is important to note that much of human

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[4] Thich Nhat Hanh, *No Mud, No Lotus* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2014), 26-27.

suffering comes from a lack of love between persons and poor choices on the behalf of humanity. This can be seen most obviously in situations of war or crime. However, even situations such as extreme poverty and famine are seemingly preventable if human beings could come together in complete love for each other. On the psychological level, we can also see suffering from a lack of love in certain mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety. We can feel isolated from others for a variety of reasons. But we note all of this only to listen to our suffering. What are these sufferings trying to tell us about human beings, in general? They tell us that there is a deeply ingrained need planted at the center of the human person, in our being, to be loved unconditionally, and this need remains dreadfully unfulfilled.

When we note that most of our suffering comes from being inadequately loved, we realize this great need within ourselves. We have shown the ontological reason for this need. Our being-with-others makes up a part of who we are as persons, and when we do not have relationships of love in our lives, our being suffers at its core. But this love cannot be merely superficial or conditional. What we long for, in our being, is perfect, unconditional love. In other words, we long for the type of love that affirms our existence without any other reason than it is good that we exist. We want someone to look inside our hearts and say to us, "yes, I love you, in the way that you are, for who you are, and your existence is good and meaningful simply because you are you."

But perhaps we see the problem. The love of human beings is flawed, even at the best of times. We cannot expect such pure and perfect love to come from others because they too are wounded in the center of their hearts with the same wound that we have. They too have not received unconditional love, and so, they too are hampered in their ability to give unconditional love to us. Because of our own traumatic experiences, our capacity to give and receive love is diminished, as was mentioned in chapter four. We need a Love that can bring healing to these experiences and that can counter the shame of feeling unwanted and unlovable within our own being. Finally, the fact of death seems to demand more than just

unconditional love, but a Love that can restore life eternally and perfectly.

It should be obvious to us that it is only God, who is Love-as-Being, who can love us in this way because only God is in the position to do so. It is only God who can restore life to the way it was meant to be. Because He is our Creator and because He is already at the center of our being as the rock upon which our existence is established, He is capable of the pure and complete affirmation of our being and of bringing us into eternal life. He is capable of healing the shame at the center of our being and defeating death. Therefore, if we are to learn anything from our suffering, it is that we must search our being as individual persons, through reflection, to seek the source of eternal and infinite Love at the center of Being. This is the need that is written in our hearts, and this is what our suffering reveals to us when we listen to it deeply – we *need* Him.

It appears to us at the outset, then, that the meaning of suffering is to lead us into the heart of Being where we can find the unconditional, compassionate, and tender Love that we long for. Let us now examine three general steps we can take toward Love to see how they may bring resolution to the dilemma of our existential suffering. Let us ask the questions: how can we encounter this God of Love in our broken world? How can we deepen our relationship with Him? How does His relationship with us change our experience of suffering?

c. prayer as the first step toward Love

The first, most obvious, step in our search to find this Love is to pray, but we must immediately clarify what we mean by "prayer." Prayer is not a formal mumbling of prescribed words. Rather, true prayer is speaking and listening to God at the center of our being. It is an authentic line of communication that enables us to develop a relationship with Him. But this can be a difficult step to take because it requires openness and vulnerability to a God whom we may be bitter towards. If we are bitter towards God because of the

gravity of our suffering, then we may be better off thinking in terms of a search for unconditional Love at the center of our being rather than thinking in terms of a search for God. Sometimes the concept of God that we have in our minds is incompatible with Love.[5] We may see God as indifferent or even as a tyrant. But hopefully, over time, if we persevere in our search for unconditional Love at the center of Being, our understanding of God will grow, and we will come to know that He truly is Love. Toward this end, our prayer does not need to be filled with words. It does not even need to contain any words. Perhaps the most effective form of prayer is contemplative, silent prayer.

We can think of contemplative prayer as simply being in the presence of Love. It is an awareness of the connection between my subject-being and Love-as-Being. We may recall chapter three when we briefly discussed the meditation of Buddhism. However, the difference is that we have come to discover that there is Love inherent in Being and that Being is a Trinity of Persons. This establishes a relationship, a flow of love between ourselves and Being, that occurs on the ontological level of being-with. We said in chapter three that Being cannot be the intentional object of consciousness, and this remains true. However, since Love is at the heart of Being, we can have a subject-Subject relationship with Being that surpasses the consciousness-phenomena dyad. Contemplation, then, goes beyond meditation because it is inter-relational. Fr. Martin Laird says that, "contemplation dispels the

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[5] According to psychologists William and Kristi Gualtiere, "If you carry unhealed wounds from your past they will inevitably have a destructive impact upon your relationship with God." William and Kristi Gualtiere, *Mistaken Identity: Clear Up Your Image of God and Enjoy His Love* (Old Tappen: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1989), 58. In order to heal, we must treat our relationship with God as a true relationship. They state, "Our relationship with God is like any other relationship in this sense. When you have hurt or angry feelings toward someone and don't share them you get in trouble. The emotions begin to build to resentment or bitterness and leave you feeling separated and emotionally cut off from that person. It's only when you go to that person and share your feelings that you are able to work them through and get reconciled with God. It's this type of emotional honesty with God that is the only way to get relationally in tune with His love." Gualtiere, *Mistaken Identity*, 20.

illusion that we are separate from God . . . it gives birth to the simple realization that God is the all-loving, groundless ground of being."[6] It is not just an awareness of the truth of the presence of Being but *a personal communion* with the Trinity in the heart of the person. This flow of love is the heart of contemplative prayer, and it requires vulnerability on our part to allow Him to encounter us as we truly are in our shame, confusion, and brokenness and to allow Him to love us there.

Hans Urs Von Balthasar speaks of contemplation as being under the gaze of God. He states that, "God's gaze is not passive . . . his gaze is creative, generative, originative, by his utterly free decree. 'This is what, in my eyes, you are; this is what you mean; no other truth can have any validity but this, for me, for you, or for anyone else.'"[7] The question "who are we in the eyes of God?" can only be answered in an experience of relationship with Him, and this relationship begins in prayer. It can, of course, be answered theoretically, but to experience ourselves as we are seen by Pure Love passes beyond any description. When we begin to know ourselves under the merciful and loving gaze of God, we also begin to grow in trust. It is this trust that responds to suffering with faith and which is built in our relationship with God through prayer.

Contemplative prayer, then, is simply allowing ourselves to be held by Existence-existing and to be loved by Love-loving. Of course, the natural environment for contemplative prayer is silence. It is in silence, both interior and exterior, that we can most clearly perceive the face of God. When we look into God's eyes, we see ourselves reflected in them, and we find the affirmation for which we seek. We find that He is looking at us with eternal, unconditional

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[6] Martin Laird, *An Ocean of Light: Contemplation, Liberation, and Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 13. As we stated in Chapter 3, this does not mean that our being is the same as God's Being. Rather, it is to acknowledge that Being and Love are at the very heart of our existence, sustaining us at all times. We always have a finite form, as a creature separate from the Infinite Being of God.

[7] H. U. Von Balthasar, *Prayer,* trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 40.

Love. It is this Love that opens us up, in our being, to receive Him. It is then that we experience the true beauty of inner peace welling up within our hearts. His Love brings peace to our being in a silent being-with-Him. This takes consistency on our part to remain available to Him. But if we persevere, the veil can be pulled aside, and we can see ourselves reflected in the eyes of Being gazing upon us with Love. We can feel ourselves resting in the heart of the Trinity, if only for a brief moment. This is the first step in our search for Love. Faith can lead us to encounter Love through prayer, which begins to reassure us that our suffering will be transformed to work for our good.

d. the Incarnation as the second step toward Love

But does God just remain distanced from us as humans? Does He remain largely out of reach, incomprehensible to us? What is love to a human being without the ability to perceive and understand the other? Do we have to rely on the mere possibility of purely mystical encounters to experience and know God's Love? Of course, Christianity's answer is no. Jesus is God become man, and we may now realize that this is in accordance with the greatness of God's Love that we have discovered through our ontological investigation into the heart of Being. If God wants to be in a loving relationship with the human persons He created, it makes sense that He would unite Himself with us by becoming one of us.

According to Christianity, this is the second Person of the Trinity, the Son. In our investigation, we used the term "Awareness-as-Being." Jesus is God, Being-in-the-world, with a human body, a human mind, and a human soul. He is the union of Divine Nature

with human nature in one Person.[8] To this end, He has a human intellect and a Divine Intellect, a human will and a Divine Will. The lover always wants to be as close to his beloved as possible. What Jesus reveals to us is not only the majesty of God's Love but also the truth that we are God's beloved. He wants to give us everything He has, to enter into a union with us that is spousal in both its scope and its audacity. Marc Cardinal Ouellet states that, "His entire life, from his birth to his paschal fulfillment, is a marriage between the transcendent God and historical man, a historical and eschatological wedding."[9] He fully gives His life to us so that we may enter into life with Him. It was His mission to reveal the depth and intensity of God's Love to us through His birth, through His earthly life, through His death, and through His resurrection. It will benefit us to take these aspects of His revelation to us one at a time.

First, Jesus reveals God to us through His birth. In becoming man, Jesus shows the first quality of love that we examined in chapter four: *I am here*. He makes Himself available to us in human form. He comes to us in the peaceful sleep of a newborn infant in a manger at night.[10] God reveals to us His humility. It is a foreshadowing of what is to come on the cross. In His life, Jesus also reveals God to us through His teaching. He teaches us to call

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[8] Aquinas states that, "inasmuch as the Word has a human nature united to Him, which does not belong to His Divine Nature, it follows that the union took place in the Person of the Word, and not in the nature." Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III.2.2. We can say that the human nature of Christ subsists in the Divine nature of Christ (as the second Person of the Trinity). This means that He is one Person and that His humanity does not have an autonomous existence separate from His Divinity. Furthermore, there is no mediating principle between His Divine nature and His human nature to bring them together. Rather, their union is direct. Therefore, anything that can be predicated about His humanity can be predicated about Him in His Divinity. To say, "God was hungry," is to say that, "Christ, in His human flesh, experienced hunger." Since, Christ is one Divine Person, and because His humanity subsists in His Divinity, we can say that, "God was hungry." This is known as the hypostatic union in which Christ has two natures, human and Divine, in one Person. Jesus truly shares in our humanity.

[9] Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love,* trans. Michelle K. Borras and Adrian J. Walker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 229.

[10] See Luke 2:8-16

God our "Father" and to see Him as someone whom we can develop a loving and personal relationship with.[11] He further demonstrates the mercy and love of God through healing and forgiveness.[12] He understands the depths of human suffering, and He has come to relieve that suffering.

Second, Jesus reveals God to us through His death. He was crucified because of our sins that have caused so much human suffering.[13] His death reveals that God shares in our sufferings, and this demonstrates the second quality of love: *I am here with you*. God is with us in our suffering, not just because He suffered and died on the cross, but because He is with us now in our current state of suffering. Prayer strengthens this bond. God does not abandon us to isolation in our suffering. His Being is with us in the suffering of our being, so that we are not alone. If we feel abandoned by God, we may remember Jesus' words on the cross, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?"[14] According to G.K. Chesterton, Christianity is the, "one religion in which God seemed for an instant to be an atheist."[15] Jesus shares even in our abandonment and shame when our suffering seems so great that we can no longer believe in God's love. God is with us even there - on the level of being-with-us in a subject-Subject relationship. Faith reveals this to us.

Lastly, Jesus reveals God to us through His resurrection. He shows us that death and suffering do not have the final say in our existence.[16] It is Love that has the final say for, "love is strong as death."[17] This demonstrates the third quality of love: *I am here for you*. Jesus reveals to us that God is truly working for what is best in

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[11] See Matthew 6:9-13

[12] For instance, see Matthew 9:2-7

[13] See 1 Peter 2:24

[14] Matthew 27:46 (RSV)

[15] G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2007), 130.

[16] See 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

[17] Song of Solomon 8:6 (RSV)

our lives and that He is concerned with our deepest longings for life, love, beauty, truth, and goodness. The resurrection into eternal life is the source of our hope in God's Love because death cannot separate us from Him.[18] Jesus, in the three qualities of love, reveals to us the face of God as Love through His life, death, and resurrection.

It is because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, that Von Balthasar can say that Jesus is, "the ontic bond between God and the world."[19] As the second Person of the Trinity, what we have termed "Awareness-as-Being," He is fully human and fully Divine, as we noted previously. Thus, through all of His human actions, the Divine penetrates the being of the world in His humanity united to Divinity. He is the fullness of the Revelation of God to us precisely because He is a bond between humanity and Divinity in His very Being. He is the consummation of God's Being-with-us and the ontological origin of the possibility of our being-with-God. He is the second step that we can take in our search for Love. It is our faith in Him that can bring us hope that Love will triumph and that we are not alone in our suffering on earth.

e. the Church as the third step toward Love

But Jesus' mission does not stop with the resurrection. He established a community to carry on His mission for the remainder of humanity's time on earth.[20] This community is the Church. It is in the Church that Jesus makes Himself most accessible to us

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[18] See Romans 8:38-39

[19] H. U. Von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology, vol. 2: Spouse of the Word* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 78.

[20] For instance, see Matthew 16:18-19. The pope and all catholic bishops trace their apostolic lineage back to Peter and the original twelve apostles chosen by Jesus to lead His Church until the end of time.

through Scripture and the Sacraments.[21] God knows our need for revealed Wisdom, accessible through faith, our need for community, accessible through friendship, and our need for His healing grace, accessible through the Sacraments. It is for this reason that, out of love, He gives us the gift of the Church so that we may continue to encounter Him in the tangible world. God, in His Love for us, established the Church so that we might have a share in the Wisdom of Church Tradition to know Love more deeply, a share in the community of believers to experience Love more fully, and a share in the Sacraments to enter into the life of Love Himself in the Trinity. In particular, the Church's gift of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is God's presence continued among us. Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist out of His love for us.[22] This is why adoration and the Catholic mass are so important to the Christian life. The Eucharist is communion with God and with the whole Church. According to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger,

> Communion means that the seemingly uncrossable frontier of my "I" is left wide open and can be so because Jesus has first allowed himself to be opened completely . . . my "I" is assimilated to that of Jesus, it is made similar to him in an exchange that increasingly breaks through division . . . In this way, Communion makes the Church by breaching an opening in the walls of subjectivity and gathering us into a

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[21] Aquinas says of the Sacraments, "Signs are given to men, to whom it is proper to discover the unknown by means of the known. Consequently a sacrament properly so called is that which is the sign of some sacred thing pertaining to man; so that properly speaking a sacrament, as considered by us now, is defined as being the 'sign of a holy thing so far as it makes men holy.'" Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III.60.2. The seven Sacraments of the Church are: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick. They are signs, instituted by Christ, by which grace is given to us through the Church.

[22] See Luke 22:19

deep communion of existence.[23]

Jesus did not leave us to fend for ourselves after His ascension into Heaven.[24] He gave us the gift of the Church, and through the Church, the gift of Himself. The Church is formed through being-with-others-in-God. It is an intersubjectivity that is taken up into the life of the Trinity through the seven Sacraments. The pinnacle of the Sacramental life of the Church is the Eucharist because it is the closest we can get to fulfilling these aspects of our being while still on earth.

Aquinas used the term "transubstantiation" to explain the change that occurs when the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.[25] From our description regarding the ontological structure of phenomena in chapter one, we can understand transubstantiation as a change in the substantial form of the bread into the substantial form of the Body of Christ without a change in the phenomena. The substance of the bread changes to the Body of Christ. The reason why this requires faith is that we do not ordinarily understand objects in any other way than through their appearances, which reveal what they are. The Eucharist is miraculous precisely because it transcends the usual way in which objects exist. Normally, substances are revealed by the phenomena, as we have seen. The Eucharist, however, requires an act of faith that is validated by the reason of God's Love. In the same way that Jesus' Incarnation was shown to be reasonable and compatible with our understanding of God's Love, so also the Eucharist is validated

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[23] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today,* trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996), 37.

[24] See Matthew 28:18-20

[25] He says, "the whole substance of the bread is changed into the whole substance of Christ's body, and the whole substance of the wine into the whole substance of Christ's blood. Hence this is not a formal, but a substantial conversion; nor is it a kind of natural movement: but, with a name of its own, it can be called 'transubstantiation.'" Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III.75.4. Because the substantial form of the bread becomes the substantial form of the Body of Christ, it is a change in substance.

by, and compatible with, our understanding of God's love. If God loved us so much that He would become one of us and establish a Church to continue His Presence among us, it is reasonable to think that He would also remain close to us in a special way through this Sacrament of the Church. How could Christ the Bridegroom abandon His Bride, the Church? Through faith, God provides the resources for us to draw close to Him and experience Him as the source of unconditional Love that affirms our being.

To that end, Fr. Boniface Hicks speaks of entering into these mysteries of faith with the metaphors of night and stars. Indeed, faith can seem like a nighttime experience because it transcends our surface-level phenomenal experiences to reach a fuller reality, as we noted at the end of chapter five. However, this fuller reality is not something that we are used to experiencing. Fr. Hicks ties this all together with our first step to find the source of Love, namely, prayer, when he states, "this is what we must learn in prayer – to go out into the night, to follow the dim light of a star until we come to rest and remain steadfast in the darkness of the mystery. The star here symbolizes the mysteries of faith. For those with eyes to see, they are bright and beautiful, providing a lifetime of nourishment."[26] Once our eyes adjust to this new light, we experience a greater depth and meaning in our existence. From prayer, we are led to know God's love for us, which leads us to Jesus, to His Church, and to His Presence in the Eucharist as the third step in our search toward a Love that is available to anyone who desires it. These are the stars that can shine through the night of doubt and suffering. Jesus, as the incarnation of God's Love, wants to make Himself approachable to all of us through His Church, and so, He meets us in a special way in our reception and adoration of the Eucharist. It is here that we can begin to find the inner peace that we long for amidst the existential wrestling to come to terms with our suffering.

It is for the foregoing reasons that we find Catholicism to be the true guardian of the fullness of faith. In the first place,

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[26] Fr. Boniface Hicks, OSB, *Through the Heart of St. Joseph* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2021), 125.

Christianity is the only religion that emphasizes Love to the point of saying that *God is Love*. It is Christianity that gives Love the highest place - the place of God Himself. God's Love, says St. John, is so great that He, "sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."[27] But that is not all. Catholicism goes even further with God's Love through its faith in the real presence of the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus, to be with us in our lives, not just in adoration, but in reception. We have the opportunity to unite with Love in the Eucharist. The Catholic Church also offers the Magisterium as the teacher of Love in the world, as our guide to matters of faith and morality, so that we might not be lost in confusion about how to live a life of love. Additionally, the Catholic Church is a community of believers, united as the mystical Body of Christ, through the Sacraments, which bring us into this relationship with God and with each other. And finally, the Catholic Church offers us the Wisdom of Tradition, especially through the teachings and writings of Sacred Scripture and the lives of the saints, to help us along our journey toward Love. It is for these reasons that the Catholic Church is revealed by Love as the most authentic foundation of a true, life-giving, and living faith that brings us into direct contact with the Divine.

f. finding peace in faith

Our three steps toward finding Love have given us a general pattern to come to peace with our suffering, through the journey of faith, though the process may never be completed in this life. It may indeed take us the rest of our lives just to take the first step. Nevertheless, we must continue to hope and persevere in seeking Love and in finding inner peace lest we abandon ourselves to despair and the cycle of suffering. The main significance of the three steps is that they enable us to know ourselves as God's beloved, even amidst the darkness of our suffering. As Fr. Iain Matthew states, "it is important . . . not to miss the God-content in the darkness. . . To

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[27] 1 John 4:9 (RSV)

trust – that God is present in this – can turn the pain, where there has to be pain, from death-throes into the pangs of birth."[28] When we listen to what our suffering is trying to tell us, we find that it is leading us into the birth of a new existence. It is inviting us to discover that the most important truth in human existence is this: God loves you, no matter who you are, no matter what you have been through, no matter what you have done or not done, no matter what you will do or not do, God loves you always and forever and wants to establish a living relationship with you to bring you, ultimately, to eternal life with Him.

You are the beloved of God. This is the identity we find in our search for Love in the midst of suffering. This truth of our identity is wonderfully exemplified by Henri Nouwen's work *Life of the Beloved*.[29] We must each of us rediscover ourselves as God's beloved to resolve the question of suffering in faith. It is an existential response to a deeply existential problem that gives meaning to our suffering and allows us to live fully, even amid our suffering. Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete states, "the redemption of suffering, as our experience indicates, cannot be found as an 'ultimate answer' to a problem: it can only be an event that transforms the drama of suffering into a drama of love and shows love to be more powerful than its denial."[30] This "event" is the subject of faith. It is faith that God has begun the work of redemption through Jesus Christ and that He will complete this work

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[28] Fr. Iain Matthew, *The Impact of God: Soundings from St. John of the Cross* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 87.

[29] He states, for instance, that, "long before any human being saw us, we are seen by God's loving eyes. Long before anyone heard us cry or laugh, we are heard by our God who is all ears for us. Long before any person spoke to us in this world, we are spoken to by the voice of eternal love. Our preciousness, uniqueness, and individuality are not given to us by those who meet us in clock-time – our brief chronological existence – but by the One who has chosen us with an everlasting love that existed from all eternity and will last through all eternity." Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 58.

[30] Lorenzo Albacete, *God at the Ritz: Attraction to Infinity* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 115.

in the fullness of time. It is faith that God is Love and that we are His beloved. We enter into this life of faith as a *relationship,* and since we each have a unique relationship with God and a different life path to travel, this must be done in our own hearts, in our own way, and at our own pace.

Our search for the possibility of finding peace amidst our suffering has led us to the fifth and final element that makes up human existence. So far, we have established that human existence consists of consciousness, body, mind (collectively our being-in-the-world, united by the form that is the soul), and being-with-others. The last condition of human existence is being-with-God. It is the spiritual part of the human person which is necessary for a complete understanding of human reality. This part of our being finds its culmination in our identity as God's beloved and in a relationship with Him. It is the role of faith to surpass our experiences of suffering to reach the ontological truth of our being-with-God as His beloved in a subject-Subject relationship.

Regarding this same type of personal growth that was available to those who suffered in the concentration camps of the second world war, Frankl states, "it is just such an exceptionally difficult external situation which gives man the opportunity to grow spiritually beyond himself."[31] We have come to see a way in which our suffering can lead us into a deeper relationship with God. Faith trusts its encounters with the Person of God in prayer, in Jesus, and in the Church, thereby solidifying this part of our being-with-God as God's beloved. Although our being-with-God is established by the ontological connection of Being and Love found in the Trinity, faith in God's love is necessary because of the experiences of suffering which cast doubt on that Love. It is only faith's encounters with Love that can answer the problem of suffering and lead us through the darkness of doubt. Faith, then, enables us to hold on to the truth that we are God's beloved even in times when we seem abandoned in our suffering. It provides us with an opportunity to *grow through our suffering* when that suffering is unavoidable.

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[31] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 72.

g. experiencing God in beauty

Before we conclude, we ought to recognize that our identity as God's beloved may also be revealed to us through beauty and not only through suffering. We may recognize that the role of beauty in life is to help us along these steps in finding Love at the center of existence. Beauty serves as a reminder of God's love for us, especially when we witness the beauty that can be found in acts of love. But even something so simple as snowy woods can give us a glimpse into something deeper than appearances. Consider Robert Frost's poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*:

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.[32]

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[32] Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," in *The Poetry of Robert Frost,* ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1979), 224-225.

In this poem, we get the sense that the traveler did not expect to find himself stopping at these woods to take in the simple beauty of falling snow. Nevertheless, the beauty of this scene causes him to pause his trip to take it in. The effect of beauty goes deeper than his goal of making it to his destination and seems to touch a part of his being. That is why he takes a moment to stop and rest, even though his horse does not understand, and even though he has business to attend to. The beauty of gently falling snow has touched a deeper part of his being than just appearances.

How? We now know the answer. Beauty is another way in which God reveals His Love for us and affirms our existence *through phenomena*. To gaze at something beautiful is to gaze into the eyes of God, and those eyes remind us that we are loved. That is why beauty touches a deeper part of our being than mere appearances. It connects us with the spiritual part of ourselves. It presents us with *an experience of transcendence*. Reflection upon the beautiful is one more way that we can discover that we are beloved in the heart of Being. It follows that the purpose of art, through its use of the beautiful, is to bring us closer to human reality, especially to the Love which is at the center of existence and which is revealed to us through this beauty.

In our introduction, we stated that there is a battle between suffering and death, on the one hand, and beauty and love, on the other hand. Suffering and death can lead us to believe that life is absurd, meaningless, and godless. Beauty and love, however, can lead us to believe that life is worth living, and ultimately, that God desires our eternal joy in His Love. We asked: what is the meaning of death? From the secular point of view, death is the final stamp on the absurdity of life. It makes everything we do, everything we are, meaningless. However, for someone who has realized their identity as God's beloved child, death is the beginning of their true life. This is what Jesus revealed to us in His resurrection. He has come to give us the hope of eternal joy. But as to the question of whether we believe that death or life prevails in the end, the answer will have to come from the center of our being, from our hearts, and not from our

intellect.

We can indeed come up with plausible explanations for the presence of suffering and death that are compatible with a loving God. Yet, we have found that these answers are wanting because the nature of suffering reaches the core of our being. We have also learned that suffering, if we take the time to examine it and listen to it, reveals our need for unconditional love. Suffering is a wound at the center of our hearts that can only be healed by becoming vulnerable in a relationship with Love. This is because, as we noted in chapter four, love is a wound, an openness to another, and the lack of Love in our world is experienced as the wound of suffering. When we hold our suffering with deep attentiveness, it can draw us back to the source of Love through encountering God in prayer, in Jesus, in His Church, and in reflection upon the beautiful.

Ultimately, suffering is a mystery, but it is a mystery that, when listened to properly, leads us deeper into the heart of Love and Being and not out of it. All that has been done in this chapter is to provide a very cursory overview of how suffering can draw us deeper into the ground of our being, which is Love-itself. Suffering can lead us into the womb of Love through prayer, through relationship with Christ, and through the Church. These are not meant to be simplistic answers to the problem or meaning of suffering, but ways in which we can existentially live out the mystery of suffering in our own lives through relationship with the God who is Love. Suffering is a mystery that is lived oftentimes with confusion, doubt, distress, and intense difficulty. And yet, we find that God is with us and that He meets us in the midst of His suffering through His own suffering and His own Being-with-us. It is our relationship with God that allows us to find Love at the heart of the mystery of suffering.

Throughout our investigation into being and love, we have found that they are inextricably bound together by an ontological connection. We have found that this bond is originated and culminated in the Trinity and that God is Love. But we have also questioned God's Love for us because of the presence of suffering and found that this suffering reveals a deep need for God's

unconditional love. Our suffering has shown us, in a general way, that we need God's Love to fulfill our being. However, we have also recognized that this need must be met on the individual level in a unique relationship with God as His beloved and not on the intellectual level of reasons. We have come a long way in our investigation, and we have fleshed out the five conditions present in all human existence: body, mind, consciousness, relations with others, and relation with God. In our final chapter, we will attempt to put all of this together and investigate how our discoveries may influence our lives and what is the purpose of life, in general.

CHAPTER SEVEN - LIFE RENEWED

We have come to the end of our inquiry into human existence, and all that remains for us is to search into some of the unexplored corners to bring to light that which we have not yet analyzed. Most importantly, we have learned the magnitudinous role of love in our lives. Love, we have found, is the essence of our being-with-others as well as the foundation of our relationship with God. We are connected to each other and to God through love. It is not simply an adage, therefore, to state that love is the most important part of human existence. We may even say that we exist to be loved and to love. The ontological climax of the human person is to *become love*. We have noted earlier that we exist our love because it is part of our being. What then does it mean to become love? Furthermore, what is the role of freedom in this process? It is these questions that we will seek to answer in this final chapter.

a. freedom and facticity

We will begin with the later question as we have postponed a fuller analysis of freedom until now. Only through understanding freedom can we hope to know how to reach the fulfillment of our existence as a person. In our second chapter, we said that consciousness was free in the sense that there was nothing prohibiting it from taking this or that phenomenon as its intentional object. There is nothing in consciousness, since it is pure awareness, to prevent it from being free if we take freedom simply to mean the ability to choose. Consciousness is its own freedom because, as a pure subject and not a phenomenon, it is not conditioned by the laws of causality that we find in the phenomena. However, we also noted that consciousness is not isolated from phenomena but that it is extended into a mind-body unity by its being-in-the-world. Human consciousness, we said, cannot exist without an object to grasp. It is the facticity of my particular mind and my particular body that places limits on the freedom of my consciousness, and it is this point that we must examine further.

There are limits to human freedom when freedom is considered merely an arbitrary choice between options. Of this, there can be no doubt. To take an obvious example, I cannot choose to flap my arms in such a way that I take flight as a bird. Nor can I choose to turn a rock into bread. I cannot choose to successfully saw through a tree with a piece of floss. There are innumerable physical limits placed upon phenomenal objects and upon my body as a phenomenal object that my consciousness is extended into. How fast I can run a mile, therefore, is constitutive of the length of my legs, the capacity of my lungs, the health of my heart, etc. But my mind also limits my freedom. Just as each person has a unique body, so each person has a unique mind. The faculties of the mind, such as imagination, reason, understanding, and memory, are more or less capable of being harnessed based on the individual mind of the person. To take an extreme example, for the sake of clarity, a person who has a severe mental disability cannot choose to become a physicist any more than an elderly man can choose to become a professional football player. But this does not make them any less of a person or any less free.

The freedom of consciousness, we have said, is limited by the facticity of the body and the mind that it inhabits. But within those limits, it retains its pure freedom. The mind and the body are, as we have discovered, necessary for human existence and part of what makes the beauty of human existence possible. From this standpoint, our actions are a blend of both freedom and facticity. We may rightfully wonder where we may draw the line between them. Where does our freedom end and facticity begin? We must come to recognize that we cannot answer this question because our actions are produced by this very blend that we spoke of. When we act, we cannot separate our freedom from our facticity since *we must act through our mind and our body*. This is precisely why the lines between our freedom and our facticity are so often blurred and why we cannot clearly distinguish between them. Merleau-Ponty speaks

of this with great insight.[1] For our purposes, we must be content with the understanding that our choices are, of necessity, a mixture of the freedom inherent in our consciousness and the factual limits of our mind and our body subject to the laws of the phenomenal world.

But is that all that freedom is? Is it merely a choice of indifference between random options? Earlier, we noted that I cannot do things such as flap my wings and take flight like a bird, and this is because I have a different essence than a bird. I am a human being, and by that fact, I have certain limitations that are different from other beings. But I am not just a set of limitations upon pure freedom. What we have developed so far in our investigation is an insight into *the nature* of what it means to be a human being. There are things that I am made for. Certain actions will fulfill my being and certain actions will diminish my being. For instance, my stomach is made for vegetables and not for rocks. But what about me *as a whole person*? What is the fulfillment of my being?

We have seen that my being-with-others can be fulfilled in love or broken through indifference or denial of others. Additionally, we have seen that my being-with-God can be fulfilled through faith or broken through a rejection of Him. Either way, I still have a being-with-others and a being-with-God, but in my freedom, they can be lived to fulfillment or lost in repudiation. Therefore, freedom is not just an indifferent choice between alternatives, but the capacity to choose what is good. Fr. Servais Pinckaers refers to this as the *freedom for excellence*, as opposed to the freedom of indifference.[2] That which is good for us is the

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[1] He states, "to be born is to be simultaneously born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is always already constituted, but also never completely constituted . . . we exist in both ways *simultaneously*. Thus there is never determinism and never an absolute choice; I am never a mere thing and never a bare consciousness." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 480.

[2] Among the differences between these two notions of freedom, he notes that freedom for excellence is the, "ability to act with excellence and perfection whenever one wishes," while he notes that freedom of indifference is the, "ability to choose between contraries." Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *Morality: The Catholic View* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), 74.

fulfillment of our being and which most brings out the truth and beauty within us. Truth, beauty, and goodness can become lived realities through our active body in-the-world. We have seen that love is beautiful precisely because it is the fulfillment of our being-with-others. Love both fulfills and surpasses the objective moral and natural law that is founded in Truth by completing our nature in our being-with-others. The same can be said about faith since it is the fulfillment of our being-with-God while on earth.

Certainly, from the standpoint of our freedom of indifference, we can choose either fulfillment or deficiency in these areas of our being. But we cannot choose to eliminate them since they are part of our being. If we choose to reject them, we remain lost to ourselves; we become a poor caricature of who we were meant to be. On the other hand, if we choose to live them out in their fullness through the freedom of excellence, we find the purpose and meaning of our lives. Therefore, there is a right and wrong choice. To choose the ultimate good of our fulfillment through faith and love is to live out our nature. That is the purpose of our freedom – to enter into life-giving relationships of love with God and with others. The reason why we have freedom then, is to love, since love cannot exist without freedom. We must be able to choose as subject-persons in order to truly love and be loved. Without freedom, we could not enter into a subject-subject relationship because we would not be subject-persons. Therefore, because we exist as human beings, our freedom is not indifferent but is made for love. In a word, *the fulfillment of our freedom is to become love.*

b. becoming love

Now we must turn to the former question: what does it mean to become love? Furthermore, in light of the foregoing discussion, we must also attempt a discovery into *how* we may become love. To become love is to come to the fulfillment of existence, as we have seen. Consciousness. Body. Mind. These three we always have as our being-in-the-world. But our being-with-others and our being-with-God are dependent upon our choices, and therefore, our

freedom. We know that the essence of these relationships is love and that a breakdown in love damages them. To become love, then, means to exist our love of God and love of neighbor through the freedom for excellence. But to do this, we must also receive love and know that we are God's beloved. The less we know ourselves as loved, the less love we have to give to others. Additionally, every act of love is a participation in the life of the Trinity since the Trinity is the source of all love. To become love, therefore, is to enter into the life shared in the threefold relation found in Being.

This is why love is the ontological pinnacle of human existence: it leads us into the life of Being-itself. As Cardinal Ouellet puts it,

> the meaning of being is unveiled phenomenologically in human love and grounded ontologically in trinitarian love. On the basis of his being-gift - a gift received and given again, a gift shared and fruitful - man discovers the source of meaning: he finds himself in a vital communion with the mystery of Being.[3]

Through love, we are capable of sharing in the Divine Nature. In theology, this is known as *theosis*. The more we are transformed into love, through the relational aspects of our being, the more our being becomes filled with the life of the Trinity, which is eternal Love. To become love, then, is to find the fullness of our being within the giving and receiving union of the Trinity and to live this giving and receiving union of love in our human relationships with others.

Perhaps we have realized some difficulties with this. In the first place, this shared love with others is dependent upon their participation. God always loves us - that is true. But we are not always loved by others, and this lack of love on their part can inhibit our capacity to give and receive love. Furthermore, we find within ourselves limitations and imperfections that keep us from fully

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[3] Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love,* 120.

existing our love, such as shame, addiction, and unresolved trauma. In other words, when we try to put our love into practice, so to speak, we find that we have tremendous difficulty in living a life of love with others. This is because love requires that we have the capacity to make a gift for ourselves, and we struggle to achieve this due to a great many factors, as previously mentioned. In theology, making a gift of oneself for God and others is known as *kenosis*. Kenosis is not a destruction of ourselves, nor a life sentence of misery. Rather, it is to become whom we were truly created to be. But we must continue to examine what we mean by this.

In the Trinity, each Person fully gives of themselves to the other Persons. In return, each Person receives the gift of the other two Persons. This is part of the Divine indwelling that we noted in chapter five. Therefore, we learn through the life of the Trinity that our *theosis* involves a *kenosis*. Our partaking in the Divine Life requires us to become a self-gift. And yet, we receive infinitely more than we give. What we give is the one finite being of ourselves to God and others through our relationships with them. What we receive, in the end, is the gift of all humanity and the infinite gift of the Trinity. We hand ourselves over to God through *kenosis*, but through *theosis*, we are filled with infinitely more than we can fathom. Through this process *we transcend ourselves, as isolated individuals, to reach the fulfillment of love in the Life of the Trinity*.

But we must also be careful to note that the language of "self-gift" and "transcending ourselves" does not mean that we become lost to ourselves. Rather, to make a gift of ourselves we must fully possess ourselves. This means that we must be fulfilled in who we are. We have to receive ourselves from the heart of Being to unite ourselves with Being through Love. It is an active receptivity in which we both give and receive ourselves, and it is receptivity that takes ontological precedence over self-gift. Therefore, *we find ourselves* rather than lose ourselves in this process. Furthermore, by "transcending ourselves" we mean that we are no longer living a life of solipsistic isolation in the consciousness-phenomena dyad but that we break out of this dyad to

reach God and others in true relationships. In short, the *true* giving and receiving of love that we are called to means that our needs and deepest desires to become the fullness of ourselves will be honored, respected, and met.

But we also noted that there is a breakdown in this love on earth because of the wounded nature of humanity, and this is what causes much of our suffering. It causes us to become indifferent to others, to hate others, to be in conflict with them, and to deny them through subject-object relationships. In these relationships, no one's needs or desires are met. These acts of denial do damage to our being because they harm our relationship with God and our relationships with others by denying their dignity and their personhood. It is in these types of relationships that people become lost or destroyed. When we use others as objects or as means to an end, we damage our subject-subject relationship with them. When we sin, in fact, we are rending reality apart because sin disrupts the bonds of love, which are connected to our being-as-persons. Sin is the unreal, the non-being, the un-love, an emptiness and void, a parasite upon being and love.

Love, on the other hand, protects the dignity of others, which comes from their being beloved children of God. We must always remember that God created us and loves us. If He affirms our existence as a person through His creation of our personhood, then He, as Love, has given us dignity. He has established the goodness of our existence as such by creating an ontological space for us in creation. We can, in turn, recognize this dignity that is intrinsic to all persons. It is Love and Being that can restore reality to the way it was created to be – perfect harmony. Only Love and Being can reform the broken bonds that sin corrupts and destroys, because only God can renew the heart of creation from its very depths.

When we act toward others in a way that is contrary to this dignity and that is contrary to Love, we harm them and ourselves. This is important to note. God's Love for us always remains, no matter what we do or do not do. However, it is also true that our denial of others causes a sort of ontological self-punishment because it harms our being by damaging the bonds of love that connect us to

God and to others, not to mention the natural consequences of psychological or bodily harm that it may do to us. This is the connection between love and morality. Morality is founded upon love and teaches us to live the fulfillment of our being through the use of our freedom to achieve *kenosis* and *theosis*. What makes these actions right is the very fact that we are made for loving communion with God and with others. Morality stems from the ontological nature of relationships.

We will not go into a full analysis of morality, since that is outside the scope of this work. We only generally note the connection and refer back to what was referenced in the last chapter regarding the role of the Church as established by God to be a guide for morality. The Church uses faith and reason to give practical and clear advice on the issues of morality, not to limit our freedom, but so that we can find the fullness of freedom in love. Jesus established the Church as our moral guide to help us learn how to love each other, and He leads the Church in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. We will recall from chapter four that sometimes, in fact, love says "no" to the other. This is not in denial of their being but in denial of the harm they may do to themselves or others. Sometimes, "no" can be a loving affirmation of their being, such as in the case of someone who wants to commit self-harm. In this sense, "no" can be the positive fulfillment of our true freedom to give ourselves in love. It is important that this "no" be said on the level of being-with-others through love and not being-for-others as a denial of their personhood. If it is done in the latter way, then it will only cause greater division. Correction of another is only appropriate if it is coming from a place of love for them within our hearts.

Even if someone may believe that it is in their best interest to take a certain action contrary to the moral law, for example, we must sometimes love them by gently attempting to show them the truth of the consequences of their action and how it is contrary to true, affirming love. Again, this is where the Church becomes an invaluable assistant to us in such matters and why it is of the utmost importance that the Church be clear and gentle in her guidance. When we take into account the best interests of the human person,

we must take into account all five conditions of human existence that we have noted, including the spiritual aspect of the person. We cannot ignore any of these dimensions and claim to have a full view of human reality or a complete understanding of morality.

Yet, God, because He is Love, and because He seeks the union of all His creation in love, offers us boundless opportunities for forgiveness while we are on this earth. That is also why He asks us to forgive each other, so that the bonds of love that were broken in sin may be re-established in mercy. Even after we are forgiven, however, we may continually find ourselves in a pattern of sin. We may consistently hurt God and others in the same ways over and over again. Thus, we are led back to our second question, although with a slightly different emphasis: How do we become love? In other words, how is it possible to do this in our human weakness?

c. grace and freedom

To begin answering these questions, we must recall here our insights on freedom and facticity. Although we acknowledge the limitations placed upon our freedom of indifference by our facticity, we must also acknowledge that, to a certain extent, our freedom for excellence can train and mold our facticity. For example, even though my body may not allow me to be a world-class sprinter, I can still choose to persevere in my training so that I can be the fastest sprinter that is possible within the limits of my body. Or, I can choose to persevere in my studies so that I can be the best mathematics student that is possible within the limits of my intellect. To a certain extent, we can do this with regard to love as well.

Ultimately, however, *kenosis* and *theosis* are only possible because God's grace can enable us to reach the heights of love, which we are incapable of reaching ourselves. We cannot take a simple will-based approach to becoming love. Rather, we must continually grow in our capacity to receive love from God and others to be able to give love back to God and others. That is why the three steps toward love mentioned in chapter six are so fundamental and necessary. Our facticity makes us as incapable of entering into the

life of the Trinity as we are to fly like a bird. However, through developing a deep relationship with God, which includes encountering Jesus as merciful and loving in the Sacraments of the Church, this process slowly begins to take place. In short, through the cooperation of our freedom in a subject-Subject relationship with God, He makes available the grace that we need to enter into His Life of giving and receiving love. It is a gradual process that cannot be rushed by us.

We should, by now, also realize, from the depths of our wounded nature and the amount of suffering of the world, that we stand in desperate need of a Savior. We need someone to rescue us from our insanity, inhumanity, confusion, hatred, denial, despair, anxiety, shame, and fear. We need someone to forgive our guilt and teach us to forgive the guilt of others. We need someone to heal our psychological and spiritual illnesses and our traumatic experiences. We need someone who can pull us through the finality of death and into eternal life. In a word, we need someone to help us enter into the Life of the Trinity. Jesus is the only one who can do this because only He is the union of God with humanity, in one Person, through His taking on of a human body in the Incarnation. Only He could have offered up a perfect sacrifice of infinite love to God on our behalf to remedy all our wounds.

On the cross, Jesus absorbed all the sinfulness and hatred of humanity into His mercy. He entered into our suffering and death to transform it into new life through His resurrection. In the misery of the human condition, we stand poor before God, who wants to fill us with His Life. When we fuse our poverty and weakness with the fullness of Divine Love that He pours into us through our prayer, we begin to know how much we need Him, but we also begin to know how much He loves us with tenderness, compassion, and mercy. Furthermore, through the life of the Sacraments and the reception of the Eucharist, we draw into His Divine Life, and He gives us the grace we need to reach our fulfillment in Him. The heart of this grace is His Love.

Therefore, we should not think that our weaknesses and faults prevent us from drawing close to God. We should not think

that God does not love us or want to be with us because we are selfish and flawed. We should not think that we have to be perfect to enter into a relationship with Him. It is precisely the opposite. It is ultimately not our striving that brings us closer to God but our allowing Him to love us *as we are* so that He can bring us to a better place. Fr. André Daigneault says that,

> holiness . . . is to discover that to love is not, first of all, being heroic, but it is to offer one's weakness . . . We do not build our own holiness, not even through *our* generosity. We do not build holiness through *fidelity* that can engender pride. In a heart poor and humble we receive holiness like that received by the good thief on the cross with the crucified Jesus.[4]

The good thief was able to receive the love of Jesus *because of* his weaknesses, not *despite* them. It was his humble recognition of his need for Jesus' love and forgiveness that enabled him to encounter God and establish a life-giving relationship with Him.

Holiness, then, must be *received* by a poor and humble heart that is stuck in its failings and that cries out to God in its desperation for love, acceptance, healing, and mercy. It is only such a soul that is capable of entering into the heart of God. According to Brennan Manning,

> God loves who we really are – whether we like it or not. God calls us, as He did Adam, to come out of hiding. No amount of spiritual makeup can render us more presentable to Him . . . "Come to me *now,*" Jesus says. "Acknowledge and accept who I want to be for you: a Savior of boundless compassion, infinite patience, unbearable forgiveness, and

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[4] André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, trans. Andrée M. Wagatha (Fort Collins: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2016), 63. See also Luke 23:39-43.

love that keeps no score of wrongs."[5]

God accepts us and loves us no matter what. Yet, because He loves us, He wants to see us become the fulfillment of whom we were meant to be. He wants to see us filled with joy and peace. Therefore, the more we allow Him to love us *as we are*, the more we are drawn into a sharing of His Divine Life. In this way, we become love in the unique person that we were created to be, not through our efforts, but through a relationship with Him in which we accept the love He wants to give to us right now in this moment.

Each of us has a unique mind and body and a unique relationship with God, and so, each of us must seek the answer to the question of how to *become love* on an individual level. Morality does not constrict our love but opens up the possibility of finding the fullness of life in the unique expression of love that we are meant to be, as we have seen. Each of us also can transcend the factual limits placed on our love to reach beyond what we think is possible through a life of relationship with God in prayer and in the Church. God does not come to rip things out of our life or to judge us, but to give us that which we truly yearn for.

Each of us has an individual vocation, and the meaning of our vocation is how we are called to give and receive love in our everyday lives. Frankl observes that, "man constantly makes his choice concerning the mass of present possibilities; which of these will be condemned to nonbeing and which will be actualized? Which choice will be made an actuality once and forever, an immortal 'footprint in the sands of time'?"[6] These decisions are for us to make and no one can make them for us. The way we choose to fulfill our meaning in life will be different for each of us. We may ask ourselves: How can I become love for others in a giving and receiving relationship with them? How can I use my God-given

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[5] Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2015), 6. See also Genesis 3:1-10.

[6] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 121. He is here quoting a part of the poem "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

gifts for their benefit? Is it through art? Science? Starting a family and raising children? Teaching? Medicine? Media? Law? Religious life? Philosophy? Theology? Or perhaps it is through working with my hands as a carpenter, baker, or butcher. Or, perhaps it is through engineering or architecture. In whatever the circumstances may be, to become love is to spread my unique love into the world through my particular gifts and to receive the love of others through their unique gifts.

When speaking of this type of self-knowledge, the notion of true self-love is not far away. We have mentioned several times that a denial of others does damage to ourselves, but we must also realize that self-rejection can do the same thing. When we reject ourselves, because we think we are unwanted or unlovable, we diminish our capacity to receive the love of God and the love of others, thereby diminishing our very being. Because we are unique individuals called to a personal relationship with God, and because no one else can be the person we were created to be, we must learn to love ourselves properly and to accept ourselves as we are if we are going to become the love for the world that we were meant to be. This means recognizing that the parts of ourselves we think are unlovable are already loved by God. We must learn to love ourselves as we are by allowing God to do the same. This requires letting God into those parts of our lives that we think are too raw, too broken, and too shameful to be loved. If we do so, we will find the infinite tenderness and compassion of a God who never ceases to love us.

We must also recognize the fact that, nowadays, the words "morality" or "church" can send shudders down one's spine. These words ring in the ears like the clinking of chains or handcuffs to keep prisoners tied down. In large part, this is because of the ways that the Church has abused its authority and has failed to live up to its teachings. Furthermore, these teachings can seem merely a means to control and manipulate people, preventing them from being happy and fulfilled. But, as Chesterton says, "the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to

run wild."[7] The reality is that God wants to give us what is best for us and wants us to avoid that which will harm us. He has established the Church, despite her shortcomings, to assist us in this process. He does not come into our lives to imprison us in misery. Rather, we will find that, the more we allow Him to love us, the more we will love ourselves, and the freer we will be to become our true selves. God enters our lives, not to restrict them, but to expand them into the eternal gift of love that He is for us. When we allow this process to take place, we learn how to love ourselves properly because we discover our true identity as His beloved.

In our families, our careers, our spiritual lives, and our everyday relations with others, then, the goal is the same: to become love through growing our capacity to give and receive love. Becoming love is not like submitting to an algorithm of moral norms. It is not cold, abstract, mechanical, or distant from our human situation. It is more like painting. Our life is similar to a blank canvas, and we, as the painter, have the freedom to paint whatever we desire. The more we put love into what we do, the more beautiful our painting becomes. The more we allow God to love us, the more the beauty of our painting transcends human capabilities through His grace. What we end up painting will be a blend between our facticity and our freedom, but we should strive in all situations to color it with love through the grace of God.

d. eternal life

Up to this point, we have not said much about the immortality of the human soul because our previous analyses did not require it. We mentioned in chapter two that the soul is the form of the person that unites consciousness with body and mind. Through the eyes of the Christian faith, we can see that the soul is the immortal form of the person that God preserves in existence through His love. At the end of time, our soul will be reunited with our resurrected and glorified body, and we will regain the fullness of our

[7] Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 87.

personhood.[8] Without both mind and body, our humanity would remain incomplete. Therefore, only the resurrection of the body can restore us to the way we were created to be. The time has come to look, for a moment, beyond this life and into the next. We have come to know that God sees us as His beloved and that God will give us life after death. Our basis for this belief is His love for us. He holds us so close to Himself through His Love and in His Being that death cannot remove our existence. But we also know that we have the freedom to accept or reject His Love. This acceptance or rejection is the meaning of Heaven and Hell.

Sartre, in his play *No Exit*, concludes from the character Garcin that, "Hell is other people."[9] We must, of course, disagree with this statement based on the foregoing discoveries we have unearthed in this book. It is not other people that we experience as Hell, but the absence of love. What makes the characters in *No Exit* miserable is not their shared existence. Rather, it is the fact that they are involved in an existential struggle with each other, each trying to impose their will on the other - to turn the other into an object and thereby solidify their place as *The* Subject. What would change the atmosphere of their Hell is if they established bonds of affirmative love between themselves and established subject-subject relationships with each other that protected their dignity and fulfilled their being. If the characters were able to welcome the existence of the others as persons, forgive the past, and recognize their beloved nature as children of God, they would quickly find the atmosphere of the room transformed.

It is not the existence of others that *ipso facto* creates Hell, it is the utter lack of love that disintegrates our being-with-others of affirmation into a being-for-others of denial. Hell is also the disintegration of our being-with-God. It is the total alienation whereby we are isolated within our own solipsistic existence. We may think here of the lyrics of Roger Waters:

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[8] See 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. I. Abel (New York: Vintage International, 1976), 46.

If you didn't care
what happened to me
And I didn't care for you
We would zig-zag our way
Through the boredom and pain
Occasionally glancing up through the rain
Wondering which of the buggers to blame
And watching for pigs on the wing.[10]

These lyrics provide insight into the loneliness of life without love and the importance of love. It is representative of a life lived on the level of conflict in being-for-others. Without love, we are left to our loneliness to devour us in the dark pit of isolation, simply hoping for a miracle to bring us out of despair, always on guard in apprehension of those who would take advantage of us.

But love offers hope. Waters ends the album:

You know that I care
What happens to you
And I know that you care
For me too
So I don't feel alone
Or the weight of the stone
Now that I've found somewhere safe
To bury my bone
And any fool knows a dog needs a home
A shelter from pigs on the wing.[11]

These lyrics symbolically show the change that can happen when life is lived in the mode of being-with-others through love. It is love,

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[10] Pink Floyd, "Pigs on the Wing 1," Track #1, Animals, Harvest and Columbia Records, 1977.

[11] Pink Floyd, "Pigs on the Wing 2," Track #5, Animals, Harvest and Columbia Records, 1977.

our concern for one another that spurs us to action, which can turn our existence into joy and give us hope of eternal life. Love defends the other from hostility and provides them with safety and comfort against the regimes of hatred and indifference. It protects our dignity and prevents us from becoming alienated.

Heaven is this culmination of love in our being-with-others and being-with-God. It is our ontological fulfillment, the end for which we were created. In Heaven, there is pure love flowing from person to person and from person to God with nothing to hinder it. It will be a place more familiar to us than any home that we have had on earth because it will be the place where our hearts have always longed to be – a place where people shine like stars, where the glow of God's Love permeates through the beauty of His Creation, where peace is the atmosphere of the soul, and where truth is an endless illumination in the mind's eye. Heaven is the fulfillment of the deepest longing of our hearts - the longing for intimate, endless union with infinite Being and Love. Albacete states, "this is what our hearts really want: a God who is intimate while remaining really God."[12] To enter our true homeland of Heaven, we must become love, we must exist our love. We have seen that this is only possible through the free acceptance of God's grace which transforms us through His gratuitous forgiveness and Love. In the meantime, it is for us to continue fighting for love on earth. To fight for love is to fight for beauty and to fight for beauty is to fight for life. Beauty transcends death through hope and glimpses Love on the other side as through a veil.

Toward this end, we should not be afraid of death or judgment. We may imagine death as a total letting go from the handholds of life and falling into the arms of God's Love and Mercy. At that moment, we will have nothing left in our souls but our love and faith in Him. Furthermore, we may think of our judgment as a naked exposure where we will see ourselves before God as He sees us. We will no longer be able to hide behind masquerades or false images that we make for ourselves. But it will also be a naked

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[12] Albacete, *God at the Ritz,* 191.

exposure of God. The veil will be lifted, and we will see Him as He is – pure, tender, compassionate Love. When we see ourselves as we are, and when we see Him as He is, how can we choose anything other than to allow Him to love and forgive us in our stark vulnerability? And, if we wish, He will help us to begin this process now – to begin letting go of the possession and control we try to have over the world, over others, over God, and over our lives – and to expose ourselves to Him in all vulnerability and trust, like a little child, sharing our whole lives with Him.

e. is life worth living?

And now we have come to the end of our investigation with the same question that set us off on this path. It is time for us to complete the cycle of our inquiry by asking: Is life worth living? Is it worth crawling our way through the filth and suffering of the world to find that treasure of existence: Love? It is Love Himself that we find in the depths of existence. It is not some passing fashion of human love that fails to satisfy, but the source of all love, Being-itself, that we find on the other side of our suffering. It is unconditional, unlimited Love who illuminates our human existence and gives us hope. To be human is a mystery, to be sure. We "wake-up" one day to find that we exist, without any explanation. We find the good and the evil, the beautiful and the ugly in the world, and we ask the ultimate question: Why? This question urges us to seek deeper, to hunt for answers.

Hopefully, this work has helped us in our search. In the introduction, I mentioned the episode of love exchanged between the musician and the little girl at the concert that radiated through the audience. Now, we can see why. Love affirms Being and is able of transcending the limits of phenomena to reach the being of others. We find that the mystery of life leads us to the beautiful, especially as evidenced in love. In a word, beauty points us to what is good – Love – and Love, in turn, affirms our existence. In Love, we find hope and faith that the whole picture is beautiful, even if we do not understand how all the pieces fit together, like cracked bits of pottery

that form a mosaic.

We are not isolated in our existence but have entered into a human family with God as our Father through our being-with-others and our being-with-God. So, we seek to re-establish the ontological bonds within this family that have been broken through sin, and we seek strength for this in God, who loves us and who created us with unique gifts to bring into the world. We do this through forgiveness, through prayer, and through becoming love for others. Our love cannot be repeated. Each of us has a unique way to contribute to love and to become love. God has created us to portray love in an entirely different way from anyone else. Let us take the time we need for reflection to examine ourselves about how we can reach the heights of love for others. Let us seek our ontological fulfillment, through God's grace, by becoming the love we were created to be.

But even if we have taken away nothing else, let us take away this: it is Love that makes life worth living, and it is Love that gives meaning to life. It is Frankl who, amid the horrors of the concentration camps, noted, "a thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire."[13] Through our ontological analysis of the connection between being and love, we have reached the same conclusion. Therefore, if we choose to walk the path of our ultimate fulfillment by becoming love and entering into Divine Life, then yes, life must be counted as worth living. This is a process that we can enter into now, in this life, through our being-in-the-world, which gives meaning and a sense of fulfillment to our existence.

Sometimes we may feel lost in our being-in-the-world. The mystery of life can seem so strange and random. We may feel misplaced in a foreign land. We may not understand where we are, how we got here, or where we are going. But, we have seen that, at the root of this mystery of life is eternal Being and Love. That is the guiding star through the darkness, the full picture that the little

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[13] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 37.

puzzle piece of our lives fits into. Our role is to keep walking this path, even if we don't understand the way, and to do what we can to move ever deeper into this mystery that breaks open into eternity.

We are made to discover our own meaning in relationship with God and with others, and our being-with-God and our being-with-others ultimately converges into a single mystery of all-encompassing Love that touches all of creation. When we experience God in others and others in God, the mystery of Love becomes an existentially lived experience. We participate in the mystery of Being with all things, but it is a uniquely human experience to participate in the mystery of Love with another person, to experience Love in the heart of their being and to experience their personhood in a relationship enfolded in the mystery of Love. It is a foretaste of the eternal communion that we were made for.

St. Paul tells us that, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."[14] Hopefully, our inquiry into the meaning of human existence has enabled us to see the truth of what we are made to be, even if we can only perceive it dimly on this side of death. Hopefully, we can now see that death is not the end, but the opening up of our lives to embrace Being and to know the Truth of Love face to face. Through a life well lived, and through a death well received, we will gaze upon Beauty and Goodness and welcome the final chord, the final resolution, and the final harmony of humanity with God, and we will be able to say, "Amen."

As we now conclude our investigation, it will be beneficial for us to survey the terrain which we have mapped out to see what, if anything, we have accomplished by our inquiry. We may indeed wonder if we have not simply set up another target for philosophical shooting practice. Certainly, we can choose to doubt almost anything, and there will likely be allegations of sophistry and dogmatism that abound. But when we review our analysis, we find

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[14] 1 Corinthians 13:12-13 (RSV)

transcendental truths that are written into human existence, no matter what form it may take, and that can be applied to any situation. These truths must be known through experience. We agree with Kohak who states, "I do not believe that philosophy must retreat into silence in the face of skepsis. Still, all that can be said will not constitute an argument, nor will arguments convince . . . all knowledge rests on faith. That faith, though, is neither arbitrary nor irrational. It is an expression of a vision, a clear expression of a truth clearly seen."[15]

The words we have used point to an experience that is available to all. The presence of phenomena, mind, body, and consciousness, for instance, are necessarily given in any human being-in-the-world. The ontological structure of reality reveals the matter, form, and *esse* present in all entities. Essences also hold eternal truth. A book is a book, a leaf is a leaf, and a truth is a truth in all circumstances. Furthermore, as existence is always a given in any human experience, Being is a part of all human existence. We have come to see that Being is opposed to nothingness as light to darkness. Additionally, we encountered the reality of other subject-persons and the possibility of subject-subject relationships. We cannot fathom human existence without others. Our being-with-others is written into our existence and cannot be removed from it.

It follows from this that our analysis of love as the essence of these possible encounters remains applicable, and again, that Being is the source and end of this same love. This led us to the Trinity and our relation to God. God too, then, is encounterable in any human experience as a being-with-God that is written into our hearts and is discoverable through prayer. Life is ultimately a quest to find a deeper love, a deeper peace, and a deeper truth upon which all realities must rely. This quest is fulfilled when we exist our love for God and others through *kenosis* and are caught up in the Divine Life through *theosis*. When we find these deeper realities, we simultaneously find a deeper meaning in our lives, and we are led to have faith in God's Love for us despite the suffering and death that

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[15] Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars,* 175.

we each must face.

What we have accomplished, then, in this work is to tease out five conditions that form the ontological structure of *all* human experiences and which give meaning to these experiences. These elements are consciousness, mind, and body (which collectively are united by the form of the soul and comprise our being-in-the-world), being-with-others, and being-with-God. Although the content which fills this structure may change, the structure itself constitutes the necessary conditions for every human experience. Therefore, if we desire to live a life deeper than superficial appearances, if we desire to enter into the Divine Life of God, then we must live a life immersed in Being and Love.

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